Why does the Southeast Missouri Comprehensive Communities Project fit BTOP requirements and meet pressing state needs? Simply because no continuous middle mile full fiber infrastructure exists today within the 17 proposed funded service areas. This is a greenfield build to meet a serious middle mile coverage gap. Recognizing that broadband is imperative to serve its citizens, connect its anchor institutions, schools and public safety entities, and bring jobs and economic development to Missouri, Governor Jay Nixon created MoBroadbandNow (MBN) to meet the goal of providing innovative, quality, and affordable broadband to 95% of all Missourians within five years. As the BTOP CCI program itself makes evident, middle mile infrastructure is a prerequisite to abundant, competitive last-mile services. In the rural southeastern region of the State of the Missouri, the most economically distressed region of the State, middle mile infrastructure is either nonexistent or extremely scarce and prohibitively expensive to access, meaning that the area’s residents and businesses have little hope of realizing the benefits of competitive last mile high-speed broadband. The Southeast Missouri Comprehensive Communities Project (the Project) will directly address this problem by constructing a 719 mile, 144-count fiber, carrier-grade Ethernet backbone, able to supply 100 Mbps Internet connections to households and 1 GigE connections to businesses and anchor institutions. The Project has been selected by the State of Missouri as a primary MBN state partner, and will interconnect with the State’s two other MoBroadbandNow middle mile networks in a cohesive, state-wide effort (see Northern Missouri Ultra-High Capacity Middle Mile, Easygrants #6519 and MoBroadbandNow ‘Sho-Me MO’ Middle Mile Project, Easygrants #4521). The Project will also include a 315 Last Mile FTTH component. The Project will bring secure, redundant and affordably priced Internet access, data transport and point-to-point network service to 21 counties with a combined area of almost 14,000 square miles. The 17 proposed funded service areas (PFSAs) include 75 communities, comprised of 261,495 households and 23,282 businesses, and will pass or connect 1,683 community anchor institutions. The total eligible cost of the project will be $58.5 million, which includes a last mile cost of $8.87 million (15.6% of the total). An $11.7 million all cash match will be provided by the applicant and the state of Missouri. The resulting BTOP grant request is $46.8 million. The project is a private/public partnership led by Boycom Cablevision, one of the region’s primary rural telecommunication service providers. Boycom has engaged Missouri-based Pulse Broadband to design, engineer and oversee network construction. (Pulse Broadband also assisted a successful Round One applicant in the RUS BIP program. See Ralls County Electric, Easygrants #928, for its FTTH last mile project.) Other project partners include MOREnet, the Missouri Research and Education Network, which will offer service to community colleges and universities, K-12 schools, libraries, government agencies and Tele-Health clinics through a dedicated
fiber network embedded in the backbone. In return, MOREnet will provide the anchor connection equipment at no cost to the project, and will pay a share to maintain the network. MoDOT, the Missouri Department of Transportation will serve state transportation and other public safety agencies through a separate dedicated fiber network embedded in the backbone. In return, MoDOT will provide right-of-way access along state highway routes and hut location property at key regeneration and points of presence sites along the route. MoDOT will also pay for installation and power for their connection equipment and provide permitting assistance. The project's third state partner is the State Office of Administration Information Technology, which will provide project coordination with other state agency organizations such as Homeland Security, Conservation, etc. Other partners include a consortium of the area's community colleges, Three Rivers Community College, Mineral Area College and Jefferson College, and Missouri State University-West Plains whose districts span the project area. The final partner is the Ozark Foothills Regional Planning Commission (OFRPC). This region is severely economically distressed. Per the USDA, eleven of the state's fifteen persistent poverty-designated counties are in the PFSAs. The population density of the area's southern corridor is 34.2 persons per sq. mi. compared with 95.4 for the rest of Missouri. According to US Census statistics, compared to state and national averages, the region's population is older, less educated, and has a higher poverty rate. These facts present Southeast Missouri with serious broadband challenges, including the majority of the region having limited or no access to broadband. The Project team has worked assiduously to leverage other investments and maximize the impact of federal grant dollars. It will leverage the work from Missouri's first round BTOP Broadband Mapping Award, Federal Grant Award # 29-50-M09022. It has also worked closely with the State and with MOREnet to target the selection of the anchor institution tenants for the build out. The project includes its own last mile component in this application, but is firmly committed to open access and neutral interconnection, having recruited existing and new last mile broadband service providers (to date having received 6 Letter of Intent commitments from area companies.) Additionally, Boycom has arranged to provide fiber connectivity for the Roberts Companies Tower Division for wireless opportunities. For anchor institutions and businesses we will offer a 20 Mbps, 50 Mbps or 100 Mbps standard package, scaling up to 1GigE, as well as a point-to-point solution. Last mile service providers will be offered a 50 Mbps, 100 Mbps, 500 Mbps or 1 GigE standard package scaling up to 10 GigE, and two standard point-to-point solutions: 100 Mbps and 1 GigE. We expect to provide service to 423 customers by the end of quarter 16; 286 anchors, 130 businesses and five last mile providers. The Project will adhere to the FCC's Internet Policy Statement, FCC-05-151, or any subsequent ruling or statement and all other stipulations listed in Section V.D.3.b., Nondiscrimination and Interconnection, of the BTOP NOFA dated January 22, 2010. The Project will direct 5% of free-cash-flow for its first ten years into a fund encouraging business development and entrepreneurship. The fund will be directed and administered by the Ozark Foothills Regional Planning Commission (OFRPC), which will select participants placing particular emphasis on Small Disadvantaged Businesses. The Project team is extraordinarily qualified. Boycom Cablevision owns cable television systems, successfully providing video and high-speed data in 32 communities, covering 13 counties throughout the southern part of Missouri and in Arkansas since 1992, and has deep experience in both cable operations and telecommunications construction. The principals of its engineering partner, Pulse Broadband, have managed the design and engineering for the construction of over 50,000 miles of plant and managed the engineering for networks serving 12 million customers. Pulse Broadband's senior engineering team
created the first deployment of fiber optic technology in the cable TV industry at Time Warner Cable. Finally, all key construction, OSP, electronic equipment and NOC contractors are lined up to start the project. All have direct experience with government contracts, government compliance and Davis Bacon reporting. The OFRPC will provide grant administration, reporting and compliance oversight and will interface with state agencies, including environmental, during the construction phase. The project will create approximately 181 jobs: 147 construction jobs during the 2.5 year build, and 34 new ongoing jobs for line techs, NOC engineers, sales and G&A positions. By averaging the White House Council of Economic Advisors estimate of ARRA job creation methodology, the CWA-Department of Commerce data, and the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation study, we estimate that the project will generate 930 direct jobs and 835 indirect. Secondly, the economic development benefits are well documented and the impact on this area will be profound. Third, the services critically needed in the region are enhanced and accelerated because the build out serves critical community and educational institutions. Left solely to market forces, Southeast Missouri, and other rural areas like it, likely will have inferior technology, prohibitively expensive technology, or none at all. BTOP funding for the Southeast Missouri CCI Project presents the best and perhaps last opportunity to fill this gap.