Eastern Lee County Fiber, LLC (ELF) is a wholly owned subsidiary of T3 Communications, Inc. (T3) a local exchange carrier in Fort Myers, Florida. The Proposed Funded Service Area (PFSA) to be served by ELF consists of Eastern and Central Lee County covering portions of Census Designated Places (CDP) Lehigh Acres, Alva, and Buckingham in the east and Ft. Myers City in the west. The Eastern area is primarily bedroom communities including light industrial areas of Lee County whereas the Western area of the PFSA is the city of Ft. Myers. The total population is at 132,113 for the proposed service area per the census 2006-2008 estimate. With an unemployment rate of 13.9% and foreclosure rates reaching 44%, ELF’s PFSA has been one of the hardest hit areas of the country due to the current economic crisis. The Eastern portion of the county is designated as a priority development area by the Florida Office of Tourism, Trade and Economic Development. The outlook for recovery is hindered by the lack of access to low cost broadband facilities for the area’s anchor tenants and wholesale service providers. In particular fire and sheriff’s stations, libraries, and the Lee County School system, have limited access to affordable fiber based broadband. Due to fiscal constraints, the County cannot fund the completion of its existing network in which ELF will fill the gaps to facilitate completion of the County network. ELF will deploy a middle mile fiber optic system in a mesh configuration with connectivity to multiple internet service providers and over 100 anchor tenants in the community such as schools, public safety, libraries, colleges and health care providers. This system provides residents and businesses the ability to access and utilize advanced services such as medical imaging, telemedicine, video conferencing, e-learning, SAAS (Software As A Service) and others which require high quality, reliable and symmetrical broadband services. The system consists of six self healing rings, seven aggregation routers and a core router. The system will be over 120 miles consisting of a 288 pair fiber optic network, providing broadband rates of 10Mbs - 1Gbps to over 100 anchor tenants and last mile service providers. An IP fiber ring was chosen for its higher available bandwidth capabilities and high speed self-healing capability. Deploying a network with multiple aggregation points, access to multiple Internet Service Providers, and multiple access points for last mile providers, ELF will provide the infrastructure which is currently unavailable, yet necessary to facilitate economic growth in the area ELF has designed a system to meet both short term needs and projected long term requirements. The fiber path was chosen to pass over 100 public anchor tenants while keeping the need for fiber spur routes to a minimum. Aggregation points have been chosen to provide multiple paths to the core network routers and interconnection points for other service providers. The electronics have been chosen to meet both projected anchor tenant needs as well as providing flexibility for future growth. By passing 53,421 households and 3,000 businesses and maintaining an open, non-discriminatory network, ELF will enable private providers to connect and build
out their systems to reach residents and businesses in the PFSA. ELF is a bandwidth capacity only system with Internet connectivity in Fort Myers supplied by T3 Communications, Level 3, AT&T or FPL Fibernet. ELF has solicited input from many public entities in developing its proposal including the Lee County Government, The Lee County School System, Lee County Sheriff, Lee County Port Authority, the Alva, South Trail and Lehigh Fire Districts, Edison College, the Lee County Economic Development office and the Lee County Mental Health Agency. ELF has also garnered support from the Horizon Council, a local public/private advisor to the Lee County Commissioners along with local Chambers of Commerce. ELF will continue to work with public entities to expand services to key anchor tenants throughout area. As a result of these efforts ELF has letters of intent from Lee County; management, Schools, Port Authority, Economic Development Agency, Lehigh Chamber, Lee County Mental Health and others. Support has been unanimous and unequivocal. Projected cost for this project is $22,801,756. Thirty percent matching funds of $6,794,852 in cash and $45,675 in kind will be provided by T3 Communications. Grant funds will total $15,961,229 The cost per household in the service area is approximately $426.80. Our project clearly meets the criteria set forth as CCI priorities through the ability to serve community anchor institutions including: fifty-six (56) K-12 schools, twelve (12) first responder locations, four (4) law enforcement locations, four (4) libraries, two (2) institutions of higher education and a Junior College in addition to multiple Lee County government offices and utility plants. ELF will also create vitally needed jobs. This proposal will create 219 job-years including 13 direct high-skilled, high-wage jobs. System construction will indirectly create 127 man-years of work. Induced jobs have been calculated at 79 man-years Economic stimulus can also be generated through providing today's vital broadband infrastructure in an area that has limited resources but a lower cost basis for businesses due to the lower cost of land and property values as well as county provided economic incentives such as the Lee County Economic Development Agency and the Lehigh Economic Development Agency. ELF's middle mile network can provide the catalyst to expand both industrial development and enhanced, fiber based services to residential consumers. Entrepreneurs and established businesses will be able to establish operations in a low cost area without giving up access to the broadband infrastructure necessary for success. As last mile partners emerge, work at home, remote classroom and other broadband enabled services will become a reality for residents. Finally, ELF has the management and technical expertise to both manage the network and provide transport services to its anchor tenants and wholesale customers. ELF's primary partner, T3 Communications, Inc. (T3) is a Competitive Local Exchange Carrier headquartered in Lee County. T3 has been providing Internet, data, collocation and voice services to customers in SW Florida for over 5 years.