Applicant Name: ST TAMMANY, PARISH OF

Project Title: St. Tammany Parish - Broadband Initiative (STP-BBI).

Project Type: Comprehensive Community Infrastructure

_________________________ Executive Summary ______________________

On behalf of its Citizenry and Businesses located in St Tammany Parish, the St Tammany Parish Government is submitting this application to the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) offered by the Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications Information Administration (NTIA). The comprehensive middle-mile plan (total cost just over 99 million) covers the infrastructure requirements to build a net-neutral infrastructure. Background: St Tammany Parish is located in southeast Louisiana, north of Lake Pontchartrain. The parish has a total area of 1,124 square miles of which 854 square miles (75.99%) is land and 270 square miles (24.01%) is water. St. Tammany Parish terrain ranges from a low at sea level where the land meets Lake Pontchartrain to a high elevation of 240 feet in the rolling hills in the north. The eastern boundary is defined by swamp/marsh through which the Pearl River flows to the Rigolets. Also, the southeast portion of St Tammany Parish that borders Lake Pontchartrain is considered wetlands. St Tammany Parish is one of the fastest growing parishes in the State of Louisiana. Quoting St Tammany Economic Development foundation (www.stedf.org). 'According to the publication, Louisiana Moving Forward, St. Tammany Parish is the 'economic engine driving regional recovery' for the New Orleans region and the State of Louisiana. It is one of the fastest growing parishes in the State and one of the fastest growing areas in the nation. Neighboring New Orleans and having close proximity to the Gulf Coast via major Interstates 10, 12, 55 and 59, low business cost, nationally recognized school system, low crime, and first-rate medical facilities, makes the community a destination of choice for both families and businesses.' In order to sustain and foster future economic growth, this initiative is crucial. A 2000 economic study commissioned by the parish made obvious that the lack of an adequate fiber-optic high-speed data network was a major hindrance to economic growth, and is a major hurdle in attracting businesses to the area, which are becoming more and more reliant on a reliable communication infrastructure, at a reasonable price. In this Post Hurricane Katrina era, St Tammany Parish is the 'economic engine driving regional recovery' in the New Orleans Metro area. It is commonly known that the I12 corridor is the next economic growth area for the State of Louisiana; Interstate 12 runs east-west north of Lake Pontchartrain, from Baton Rouge, Louisiana to Slidell, Louisiana, where it ties in to I10 (east and west), I59 and I55. St Tammany Parish is strategically located just 20 miles north of the New Orleans, and east of Baton Rouge. This strategic location was crucial during the evacuation of New Orleans Metro area during Hurricane Katrina, in the resettlement of the Metro area, St Tammany saw its population explode. This population explosion has put demands on the infrastructure beyond intellectual capacity, this demand is not only housing, roads, and utilities, it extends to the broadband communication infrastructure. This infrastructure is also important for public safety, as the parish's emergency
resources are distributed around the parish, communication to these vital resources is necessary in a Homeland Security and/or Emergency Operations event, this was demonstrated during in 2005 with Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and then again in 2008 with Hurricane Gustav. During these events, communications to these vital resources were lost to common carrier infrastructure failures. The Parish intends to construct a middle-mile net-neutral broadband infrastructure to be Parish operated and maintained, with leased dark-fiber to last-mile providers. Public entities will be encouraged to utilize this infrastructure to ensure more reliable communication. The infrastructure is designed to be net-neutral and non-discriminatory to any provider, to any demographic, or to any region. The purpose of this initiative is to provide reliable communications for public safety purposes, provide reliable communications for Emergency Operations, and provide high speed broad-band to those unserved and underserved areas. It is not the intent of this initiative to compete with last mile service providers, but to assist them in reaching the unserved and underserved areas which until this opportunity has been beyond their financial investment. This initiative will allow these private entities to fulfill the mission of both BTOP and BIP. After careful analysis and leveraging of private industry experience, a unique model was developed for inducing broadband service providers to reach the most rural areas of St Tammany Parish. After meeting with several potential last-mile providers, it was ascertained that the major impediment to delivering broadband to the unserved/underserved areas was that 42% of the costs is in the middle-mile portion of such projects. The model proposes a public/private enterprise whereby through this initiative the initial cost of the middle-mile infrastructure will be covered. In exchange for supplying the middle mile infrastructure, participating public entities will receive 25% of the total capacity, with the remaining 75% share of the broadband capacity for the last-mile providers to deliver broadband services to the general populace and business. This overall middle-mile proposal was favorably received by potential providers during initial discussions, and would add the necessary stimulus required to make it economically feasible for them to provide broadband services to the most unserved/underserved constituents in St Tammany Parish. St Tammany Parish, a Home-Rule governmental entity, not a socially or economically disadvantaged small business as defined under section 8(s) of the SBA, doesn't expect to engage any required licenses, franchises or regulatory approvals. Where right-of-way approval is needed St Tammany Parish will be submitting the permit request for all fiber route construction as a single request that allows the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development to expedite the process accordingly. St. Tammany has consulted with several prospective contractors for the construction and is assured of their ability to engage quickly to meet the programs timeline targets. St Tammany will also be utilizing the Office of State Purchasing contracts for all products and services that also aim to meet the program's timeline targets. The middle-mile design will be a fiber-based transport network type with support for Ethernet and IP-based communication technologies. The delivery of services will be through an open net-neutral middle-mile fiber network. In summary, this proposal seeks to address the lack of competition of last-mile providers in the area as defined above, by reducing the cost and access barriers to a middle-mile infrastructure. The proposed service area is a middle-mile design covering St Tammany parish which includes 9 rural communities, 96,736 households, 13,589 businesses and community anchor institutions, public safety entities and critical community organizations. The proposed services include fiber, space leases, and dark-fiber leases for last-mile providers. St Tammany Parish Government agrees that broadband networks that are widely deployed, open, affordable and openly accessible help insure the sustainability
of the advancement of its citizenry, its businesses, and educational and information resources. Its net-neutral design doesn't favor any existing last-mile provider in the proposed service area so consumers will have a choice of which last-mile provider to contract for their services. The proposal is a wire-line network type using a standard off-the-shelf fiber-optic cable technology. With federal funding of $38M and matching funds of $12M, STP-BBI will present a cohesive infrastructure that addresses issues across BIP and BTOP initiatives and provide the stimulus to expand broadband access to unserved and underserved communities, to increase jobs, spur investments in technology and infrastructure, and provide long-term economic benefits. The proposal conservatively estimates that over 10K subscribers in our proposed service area will utilize this middle-mile design. We estimate that our proposal will generate 400 job years directly related to project implementation and thousands of potential indirect jobs added to the local economy.