

Traverse Bay Broadband Support Letter Fact Sheet

February 9, 2010

What Is Broadband? Broadband or high-speed Internet access allows users to access the Internet and Internet-related services at significantly higher speeds than those available through “dial-up” Internet access services. Broadband speeds vary significantly depending on the particular type and level of service ordered and may range from as low as 768 kilobits per second (kbps), or 768,000 bits per second, to six megabits per second (Mbps), or 6,000,000 bits per second. Some recent offerings even include 50 to 100 Mbps. Broadband services for residential consumers typically provide faster downstream speeds (from the Internet to your computer) than upstream speeds (from your computer to the Internet).

How Does Broadband Work? Broadband allows users to access information via the Internet using one of several high-speed transmission technologies. Transmission is digital, meaning that text, images, and sound are all transmitted as “bits” of data. The transmission technologies that make broadband possible move these bits much more quickly than traditional telephone or wireless connections, including traditional dial-up Internet access connections. Once you have a broadband connection to your home or business, devices such as computers can be attached to this broadband connection by existing electrical or telephone wiring, coaxial cable, or wireless devices.

What Are The Advantages of Broadband? Broadband allows you to take advantage of new services not available or not convenient to use with a dial-up Internet connection. One such service is Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), an alternative to traditional voice telephone service that may be less costly for you depending on your calling patterns. Broadband makes “telemedicine” possible: patients in rural areas can confer online with medical specialists in more urban areas and share information and test results very quickly. Broadband helps you efficiently access and use many reference and cultural resources, such as library and museum data bases and collections. You also need broadband to best take advantage of many distance learning opportunities, like online college or university courses, and continuing or senior education programs. Broadband is an important tool for expanding educational and economic opportunities for consumers in remote locations. In addition to these new services, broadband allows you to shop on-line and Web surf more quickly and efficiently. Downloading and viewing videos and photos on your computer are much faster and easier. With broadband you can access the Internet by turning on your computer without needing to dial up your Internet Service Provider (ISP) over a telephone line, which permits you to use the Internet without tying up your telephone line.

What is Happening in the Traverse Bay Region for Broadband? A recent study funded by the governments and economic development corporations within the Traverse Bay region as part of an initiative to bring American Reinvestment and Recover Act funding into our area for job creation and economic growth identified that less than 60% of the Traverse Bay region households had access to high-speed Internet service. This is well below the 2008 state average of 78%. The study is part of an overall regional initiative to strengthen private sector applications to 2nd round ARRA funding proposals being administered by the USDA Rural Utility Service as well as identify other funding sources and remove barriers from deployment for these private companies. Any 2nd round federal funding applications need to be completed by March 15, 2010 at 5:00 p.m. ET. A working group has been formed by the Traverse Bay EDC to help prepare information specific to the four county Traverse Bay region, review, coordinate, and endorse applications that include the counties of the Traverse Bay EDC (Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska and Leelanau) within their service area.

How Can the Residents of the Traverse Bay Region Help? A key element to successful applications is letters of support for the submitted application. These letters of support should come from governmental bodies, libraries, media, schools, first responders, public safety, civic organizations, business organizations, individual businesses, elder care facilities and individual residents. Each letter of support needs to be signed and multiple signatures are permitted for groups contributing a letter of support. Letters of support should outline the following and be as personal and specific as possible:

- identify the individual, businesses or organization,
- if you currently have access to broadband service at your home, office or at your organization facility,
- the level of performance and affordability of the broadband service,
- the benefits, what you will be able to do and what you are not currently able to do, of broadband,
- the economic impact of having broadband, new business services and/or jobs that will be created,
- specific statistics that you may have to substantiate the impact, and
- other specifics that would help substantiate the need for award of the federal funding.

Example 1 – Individual Unserved Letter

February 9, 2010

David J. Villano
Assistant Administrator Telecommunications Program
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U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)

Our community, in the Traverse Bay Region of Michigan, lacks adequate access to high-speed Internet service. A recently completed study funded by the regional county governments and economic development corporations for Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska and Leelanau Counties Michigan determined that less than 60% of our households had access to basic broadband rate service (768kpbs down-link/200 kbps up-link) an adoption is much lower than this due to affordability. My residence does not have access to basic broadband service. Therefore I am extending my support for the ARRA USDA BIP application to the broadband stimulus program for service in the Traverse Bay Region of Michigan.

The proposed plan for the Traverse Bay Region supports local economic development and enhancement by the deployment and availability of broadband access, including service to core institutions like business centers, community centers, education, libraries, healthcare, villages and public safety. The services described in the proposal will provide significant benefit to our community for information access, education accesses, collaboration, work and entertainment.

I understand the need for community support for this project. In addition to bettering our educational opportunities, access to healthcare resources, telecommuting, online government and community resources and overall improved ability to keep in touch with loved ones and clients alike, our community will be better positioned to attract new and keep existing residents, jobs and businesses.

We look forward to the successful review and award of the proposal for service in the Traverse Bay Region and to the timely deployment of affordable, quality broadband Internet access in the rural communities of the Traverse Bay Region of Michigan.

I support the plan to pursue broadband stimulus funding and request that the proposal be funded.

Thank you,

Signature: _____

Name and Contact: _____

Business / Organization (optional): _____