

Project Summary

For

Proposed Rural Sac County Fiber Project

Proposed By

Corn Belt Telephone Company

BACKGROUND

Dramatic advances have occurred in the telecommunication industry in the United States over the past several years. Iowa and the whole of the United States has seen exceptional change in the regulatory environment, the level of service customers demand from their providers, and the technologies used to provide those services. During this period, the “Internet Age” has remained elusive to many rural areas in Iowa that have lagged behind in terms of the broadband services and technologies available. This has created the great “Digital Divide”, an absence of access to many of the benefits High-speed Internet access provides. Access to High-speed Internet is critical to economic growth, job creation, education and civic opportunity. Whereas 97% of American have access to this service in urban areas, that number drops significantly to near 65% in rural areas. To help bridge this divide, Corn Belt Telephone Company, Inc. proposes to construct a fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) network which will extend coverage in the Sac County rural area.

Corn Belt Telephone is located in Southern Sac County, Iowa, approximately 15 miles away from the County Seat, Sac City. Incorporated in the State of Iowa, Corn Belt Telephone is a Communications Service Provider as defined by Iowa Code chapter 8B. The company is owned by its shareholders and is the product of the merging of Wall Lake Switching, Wall Lake Telephone, and sixteen other rural lines in 1961. Our roots were planted with the first telephone connection made in Wall Lake in 1878. Since then, it has been our mission to be the leading communications provider in Iowa.

The Corn Belt Telephone management team consists of the following individuals:

- Lee Wuebker, General Manager
- Bill Cates, Plant Manager
- Emily Swensen, Office /Accounting Manager

Corn Belt Telephone’s management team has decades of combined experience in the telecommunications industry and contributes to numerous community organizations.

Corn Belt Telephone provides a wide variety of services to residential and business customers in communities throughout western Iowa, including voice, broadband, digital cable television, email hosting, and security systems. Currently, Corn Belt Telephone provides essential infrastructure to the Sac County Courthouse, multiple county offices, Loring Hospital and the East Sac County School District.

Over the last 10 years, Corn Belt Telephone has deployed FTTH networks in several communities it serves, including Sac City, Wall Lake, Lake View and Carnarvon Iowa. This network, combined with their years of knowledge and expertise, gives Corn Belt Telephone a measureable advantage over competitors, allowing it to provide cutting edge service to customers in the Corn Belt Telephone service area, now and for years to come. While several providers have similar service offerings in Corn Belt Telephone’s existing service areas, not one provides services over a FTTH network. This advanced, state-of-the-art Fiber Optic Network deployed by Corn Belt Telephone is able to provide reliable High Speed Internet unmatched by other service providers.

PROJECT SUMMARY

This project area will be a new buried fiber to the home network (FTTH). All TSA areas in Sac County that we are applying for will be served and connected together into a single network served by Corn Belt Telephone Company. Corn Belt Telephone Company currently serves the communities of Wall Lake, Lake View and Sac City, Iowa in Sac County. This new proposed network will be tied into that existing infrastructure providing voice switching, video content and internet connectivity. This network will provide the rural locations in the TSAs in the County the same level of service available as the more urban areas. As we fight the COVID pandemic the availability of broadband services in the rural will support those locations with expanded work, education and entertainment services. Costs for travel will be diminished as the need to travel for on-site work or education will be reduced. Opportunities for new enterprises to startup and thrive in the rural area can now become an eventuality. This project will go along way toward making all of Sac County broadband bandwidth accessible.

CONCLUSION

Corn Belt Telephone Company has recently been building a new Fiber Optic Network within the City of Sac City, Iowa. Prior to this project, Sac City, the county seat, has not had a broadband FTTH Network available. Officially breaking ground on the project in May of 2020, Corn Belt Telephone Company continues to connect homes, businesses and government offices with new critical infrastructure. The service area between Sac City and Auburn, Iowa is part of the East Sac County Community School District, with school buildings and offices located in the nearby towns of Sac City and Lake View, Iowa. In recent years, the ESC School District has moved to computer based learning, with students in grades 4 through 12 assigned individual laptops. Fast and reliable broadband is now critical to education on a daily basis in this school district. Additionally, Sac County has aggressively campaigned for tourism and development, launching a new website, Instagram and updated Facebook Page this year. With many attractive services such as the ISU Extension and Outreach Center and Sac County Fairgrounds along with multiple shopping and recreational opportunities, the proposed service area between Sac City and Auburn is a very attractive place to reside for people working in or near the area. The addition of a fast, reliable FTTH network would be huge benefit for the development of this service area.

Corn Belt Telephone Company believes in the need for Rural Broadband in this service area. Alongside this application and supporting documents, Corn Belt Telephone Company believes it establishes how this project will comply with all the requirements of the Notice of Funding Availability 4, while effectively bridging the digital divide in this proposed service area. Corn Belt Telephone Company has the network, facilities, equipment, processes, experienced staff, and existing relationships and systems in place to support the successful completion of this project and add these locations to our current network. The advantages of a FTTH network over other networks are well documented in terms of their speed, reliability and long-term viability. Having access to this network will be a valuable, essential asset to keep residents in this community, provide for residential and commercial growth, enable educational opportunities, and nurture overall economic development within this service area. Corn Belt Telephone strongly believes this project will be an immeasurable investment in the future of Broadband for these locations in Sac County, Iowa.