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Westport Municipal Advisory Council

P. O. Box 307, Westport, CA 95488
www.westportmac.org

July 21, 2009

Supervisor Kendall Smith
Board of Supervisors
501 Low Gap Road, Room
Ukiah, CA 95482

Re: Support for Rural Broadband Now's (RBN) application for a USDA Rural Utilities Service (RUS) stimulus grant for a county-wide middle mile broadband fiber and last mile build out to most unserved and underserved communities in Mendocino County

Dear Supervisor Smith and Board of Supervisors:

The people in the Westport MAC's geographic sphere have expressed strong support for wired broadband connectivity that will afford equitably-priced access to the internet. Our area is considered unserved because no wired broadband service is available here, putting our citizens and businesses at a distinct disadvantage in a world that increasingly relies on this form of communication. Commercial telecommunications companies have shown no interest in extending service to our area. Many Mendocino coast communities have spent years trying to attract the attention of commercial providers. Their business models do not support extension of broadband infrastructure into rural communities.

The USDA Rural Utilities Service stimulus grants provide a unique opportunity to provide equitable broadband infrastructure and access for rural areas like ours. We are pleased to learn that RBN of Willits is applying for a grant that promises broadband connectivity for most of Mendocino County including Westport. RBN is a local business committed to rural broadband, as demonstrated by their current project to wire Covelo and Laytonville by the end of 2009 under a another grant.

We strongly urge the Board of Supervisors to issue a letter of support for the RBN grant application prior to the August 14, 2009 deadline to the attention of Michael Ireton, P.O. Box 397, Willits, CA 95490. We also request your permission to convey WMAC support directly to the RUS in connection with RBN's grant application. RBN's proposal will result in reasonably-priced broadband service to most Mendocino County residents, businesses, and anchor institutions such as hospitals, government institutions, libraries, schools, nonprofits, and cooperating broadband wholesalers such as the Mendocino Community Network. This is a unique opportunity to achieve equitable access and build much-needed economic opportunities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Thad M. Van Bueren".

Thad M. Van Bueren, Chairperson