



Westport Municipal Advisory Council

P. O. Box 307, Westport, CA 95488

www.westportmac.org

December 7, 2012

Mr. Michael Amato
Interim Director, California Advanced Services Fund (CASF)
California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC)
505 Van Ness Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94102-3298

Dear Mr. Amato and the CASF Review Team,

This letter is in support of the Golden Bear Broadband (GBB) Limited Liability Corporation's Regional Middle Mile Infrastructure (RMMI) application for broadband infrastructure deployment funds.

You have seen the following summary many times before, but it bears repeating:

This RMMI proposes to interconnect all sixteen (16) of northern California's counties via a diverse, redundant, multi-loop fiber-based network. The north state's total population is 1.57 million people (Census 2010), and total land area is 44,117 square miles, or 27% of the state's geography. Agriculture and tourism are the top two industries in the region.

With approved funding from CASF, the GBB RMMI will enhance and strengthen today's infrastructure (backbone), providing connectivity to meet tomorrow's escalating demand. Such increased service capacity (backhaul and last-mile) makes broadband services available, accessible and affordable, possibly opening up choices, as well as preserving the north state's rural way of life.

Increased availability *of* and access *to* high speed Internet services will further support a myriad of day-to-day, business-to-business, peer-to-peer virtual connections for e-commerce, on-line distance education, telemedicine, and social networking. All of which will grow exponentially in the coming years.

Each community is unique, but the consequences of lacking access to modern internet communications have an overwhelming negative impact. The area served by the Westport Municipal Advisory Council is anchored by the small rural village of Westport. The area stretches along 20 miles of rugged coastline on Highway 1 overshadowed by foothills. There is no cable, DSL, or microwave based broadband service available in the WMAC area. Cell phone service is generally available, but many households cannot get voice reception at their residence and very few can get data service. Areas such as ours need access to broadband backbone infrastructure.

Without these connections, the following occurs:

- Children in the WMAC area are bussed to school in Ft. Bragg. As with most schools now, Ft. Bragg utilizes internet access to communicate with students and parents. Internet access is also utilized for homework assignments and student research. Our students are isolated from traditional resources by distance and newer resources by lack of connectivity.
- There is an Elementary school in Westport, but there are currently insufficient students to operate it. Young families are leaving our community, searching for better economic, social, and educational opportunities.
- Recreation and tourism offer the only local economic opportunities. They cannot survive without websites, social media, virtual advertising and connectivity to and for their customers.
- Connectivity is crucial to attracting new residents to our area. Broadband connectivity gives flexibility to many jobs allowing a significant percentage of work from home days. Small businesses and entrepreneurs can start and thrive in rural areas if they have good connectivity to markets and suppliers.
- There are opportunities for farming and ranching, but the ability to compete in modern agri-business is significantly tied to connectivity.

Upon approved funding from CASF, the RMMI will implement a comprehensive plan that leverages existing infrastructure, and deploys new infrastructure, thereby interconnecting multiple service points, forming a diverse and redundant, multi-loop, fiber-based network throughout all of northern California. This type of infrastructure is critical to the viability of small communities such as those in the Westport area. We have been approached by small private Telcos that would like to provide DSL service, but can't afford to put in the basic infrastructure to allow the service.

Without state funding, the cost of building a much needed broadband infrastructure for economically and geographically challenged communities such as ours simply will not happen, summarily excluding 1.6 million people from the rest of the state, and the world. Worse, without access to such badly needed high speed Internet services, northern Californians are being restricted to merely users of information and content, not producers of content and information. While fiber to the home is an unrealistic expectation for the hardest to reach, rural remote areas, we need to upgrade and improve the existing networks to provide a fiber-based backbone to support fixed and mobile wireless networks.

As the Broadband Committee Chair for WMAC, we support the Golden Bear Broadband, LLC, RMMI application for infrastructure funds, and strongly encourage CASF/CPUC do the same.

Thank you,



Sincerely
Bill Knapp, Treasurer and Broadband Committee Chair
Westport Municipal Advisory Council

cc: Cathy Emerson, Co-Manager
Northeastern and Upstate CA Connect Consortia (NECCC and UCCC)