



December 19, 2012

Mr. Tom West, Manager
Ms. Cathy Emerson, Co-Manager
Northeastern & Upstate CA Connect Consortia

Dear Mr. West and Ms. Emerson,

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

This NRMMI 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 1.634 million people (Census 2010), and total land area is 43,298 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 NCRMMI 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.

Without these connections, the following occurs:

- Unserved and underserved areas continue to remain as such, and students face increasing disadvantages; while currently accessing the Internet via school computers *at* or *during* school, students in the more rural, remote communities risk falling behind because are unable to complete homework assignments at home due *lack of* access to high speed Internet Services away from school.
- Elementary and secondary schools bear the burden of loss of funding due the decrease in student populations, families leaving the northern counties in search of "lit" communities, or more towns with better infrastructure, hence more access to broadband services.
- Businesses, recreation and tourism cannot survive: websites, social media, virtual advertising are critical factors in today's world, not only for generating revenues but also for recruiting a work force (it is this year's college graduating class of 2012 that will have been exposed to technology their entire academic career; these students are our business's future employees).
- 35 (of 111 in CA) federally recognized Native American Tribal Communities reside in the 16 northern CA counties, and broadband is essential to deploy to all tribes whether tribal lands and populations are large or small. Without broadband, tribes cannot hope to

attract business investment of any kind, nor can they educate their children---at school or home, nor can they utilize telehealth or distance learning programs. Especially important, tribal governments cannot operate in today's inter-connected world.

- Libraries continue to remain dependent on print media, rather than transitioning to virtual information; as long as libraries continue to “preserve information”, it is critical to our evolution as a society that we retain, and revisit, our histories, preferably without felling more trees!
- Rural health clinics lack real-time, immediate access to telehealth, telemedicine support services and critical care experts; as rural populations dwindle, so will critical services, putting those remaining at severe risk of isolation.
- Agri-business, farming, and ranching all face an extinction of a new kind: outsourcing produce, and considering that CA is the 5th largest producer of agricultural products to the world, we must ensure this export!
- Intelligent Traffic Systems (ITS) and SmartGrid technologies---cameras, remote sensors, meters, etc.---are quickly becoming critical methods and measures to ensuring residents' safety, as well as delivery and monitoring of basic utilities (water, sewer, electric, gas), of which access to high speed Internet is necessary; without which we risk reverting to isolationism.

Upon approved funding from CASF, the NCRMMI 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.

Without state funding, the cost of building a much needed broadband infrastructure for these economically and geographically challenged communities simply will not happen, summarily excluding 1.6 million people from the rest of the state, and the world. Worst, 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. And on bandwidth capacities of now 6 yr old speeds, dial up is no longer an option!

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. In order to have a robust 21st-century economy, available, accessible, affordable, and ubiquitous broadband is imperative. We cannot afford *not* to do this.

As the Library Director for Mendocino County Libraries, I support the Golden Bear Broadband, LLC, RMMI application for infrastructure funds, and strongly encourage CASF/CPUC do the same.

Thank you,

Mindy Kittay
County Librarian
Mendocino County Libraries