

August , 2021

Tommy Jenkins
Director of Economic Development Commission, Macon County
Macon County Broadband Committee
5 W Main St
Franklin, NC 28734

Dear Mr. Jenkins:

I strongly support efforts for broadband infrastructure grant funding in Macon County, as a good portion of the county does not have access to true broadband. This makes it difficult and/or impossible for many of our residents and businesses to access vital programs and services.

It is our understanding that Macon County and its partner providers are seeking grants to fund the construction of fiber optic networks which will provide broadband services to homes and businesses now unserved. These homes and businesses have little likelihood of being served otherwise as they have been overlooked by incumbent providers and previous federal support programs. The rural and rugged nature of our county makes it economically difficult and unattractive for new providers to build such a network on their own.

Broadband Access Drives Economic Growth, Education, and Quality of Life

Connectivity to services in education, healthcare, public safety, and government are vital to the well-being of the residents in our county. Additionally, the top economic drivers for the county of retail and tourism are increasingly demanding access to greater internet bandwidth. What was acceptable 5 years ago in terms of speed is no longer sufficient to promote growth and remain competitive.

Where available, most residents and businesses within our county fortunate enough to have service use DSL provided by an incumbent telephone provider. This 30-year old technology is not able to achieve speeds or the reliability required to meet current federal definitions of “broadband” service. Lack of true broadband is unacceptable in a society where education, healthcare, public safety, government, retail, and tourism expect and rely on internet access, and require speeds and bandwidth beyond what can be delivered by obsolete technology.

Availability of affordable high-speed broadband service to all residents, businesses, and visitors is essential. Grant funding programs are critical to the development of broadband systems needed to provide access in unserved areas of Macon County. I fully support Macon County and its partners pursuing such grant opportunities.

Sincerely,