

**Rural Broadband I.D. Trust Fund Program
Cover Sheet**

Applicant Name: Perry County

Applicant Address: 310 West Main Street

Applicant Phone Number: 501-889-5126

Applicant Email Address: pcjudge1@windstream.net

Applicant Tax ID or EIN Number: 71-6016685

Key Contact Person: Judge Toby Davis

Total Amount Requested: \$75,000.00

Project Description:

Perry County has a population of 10,455 with incorporated cities of Perryville (County Seat) and Adona. There are 7,627 individual address locations in Perry County and First Electric Cooperative serves 6,413 electric service locations in Perry County. Of those locations, over 1,700 (23%) are in designated areas of underserved or unserved portions of Perry County. However, this data is widely known as being highly inaccurate.

Perry County must partner with a company to bring broadband service to all citizens and promote economic growth and stabilization. The COVID-19 Pandemic has accentuated the need for rural broadband. Schools, businesses, farmers, and medical facilities are suffering due to the lack quality broadband services. This is the reason Perry County approached First Electric and its subsidiary Connect 2 First Internet and asked them to consider deploying a fiber to the home broadband network in Perry County. Perry County will:

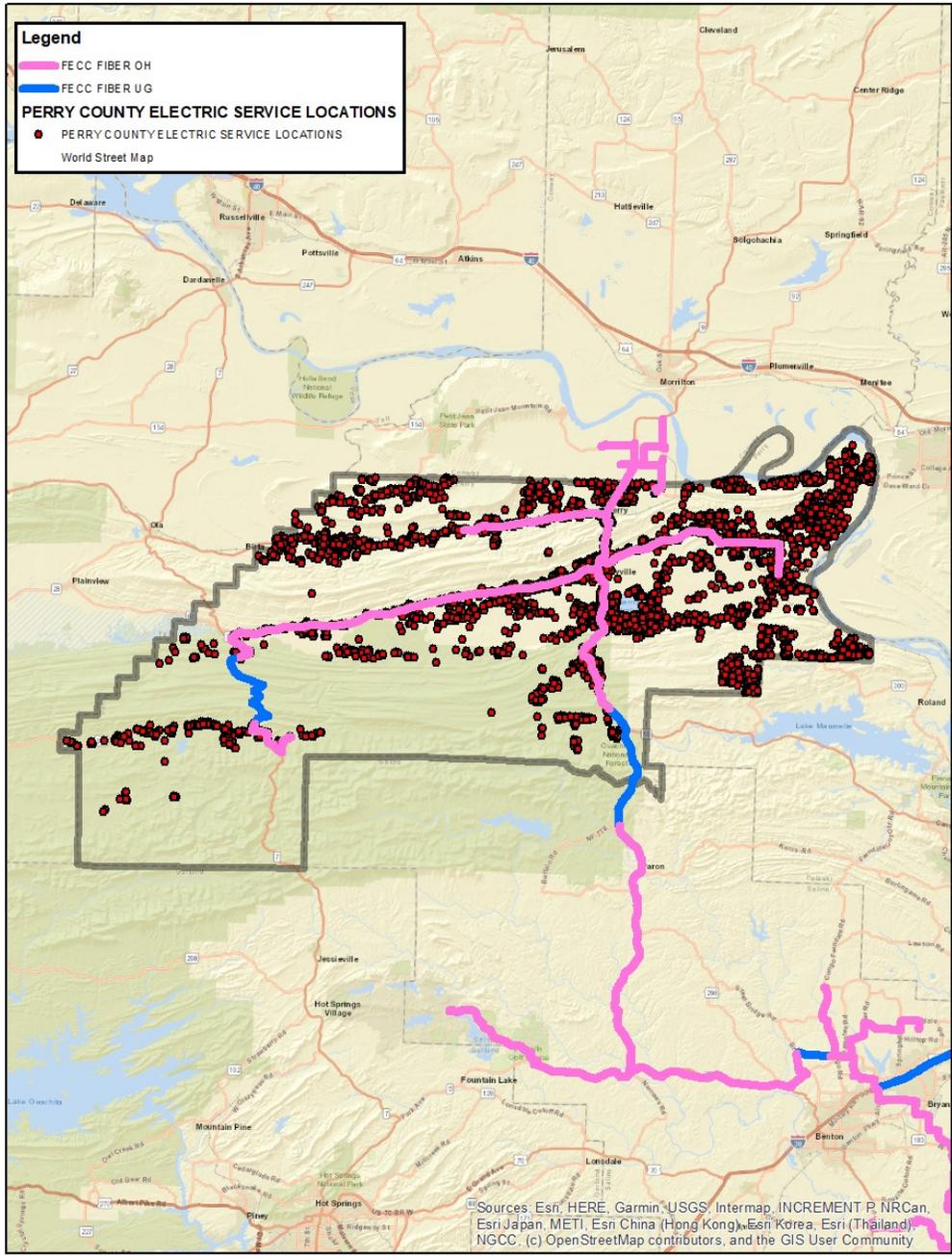
- Contract with FECC and C2FI to develop strategies for designing and deploying a fiber broadband network
- Work with FECC and C2FI to promote and broadband initiatives to local businesses and residents
- Continue to look for other funding and partnership opportunities relating to broadband development in rural parts of the county

- **Project Narrative**

Introduction (up to 30 points)

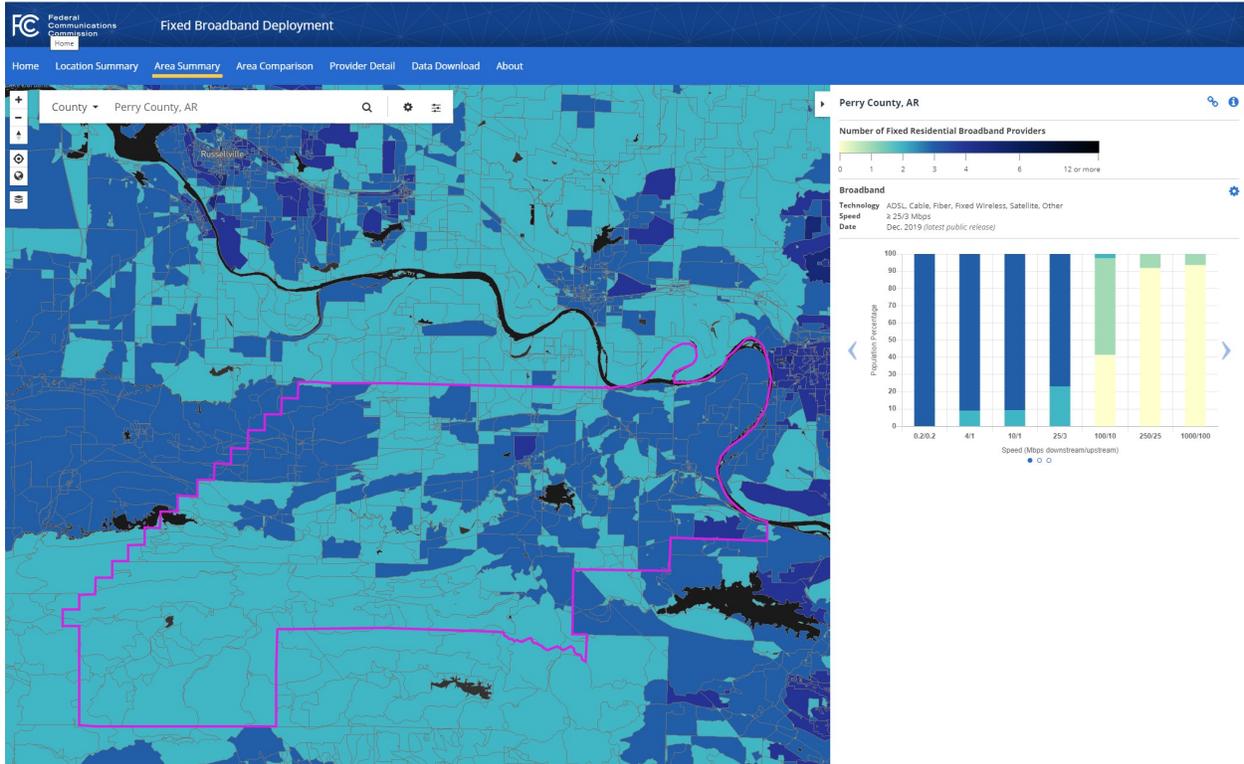
Proposed Service Area

The proposed service area will include all service areas served by First Electric and portions outside of the electric service area where their fiber backbone is located. The map below reflects the FECC Fiber Backbone route and member locations.



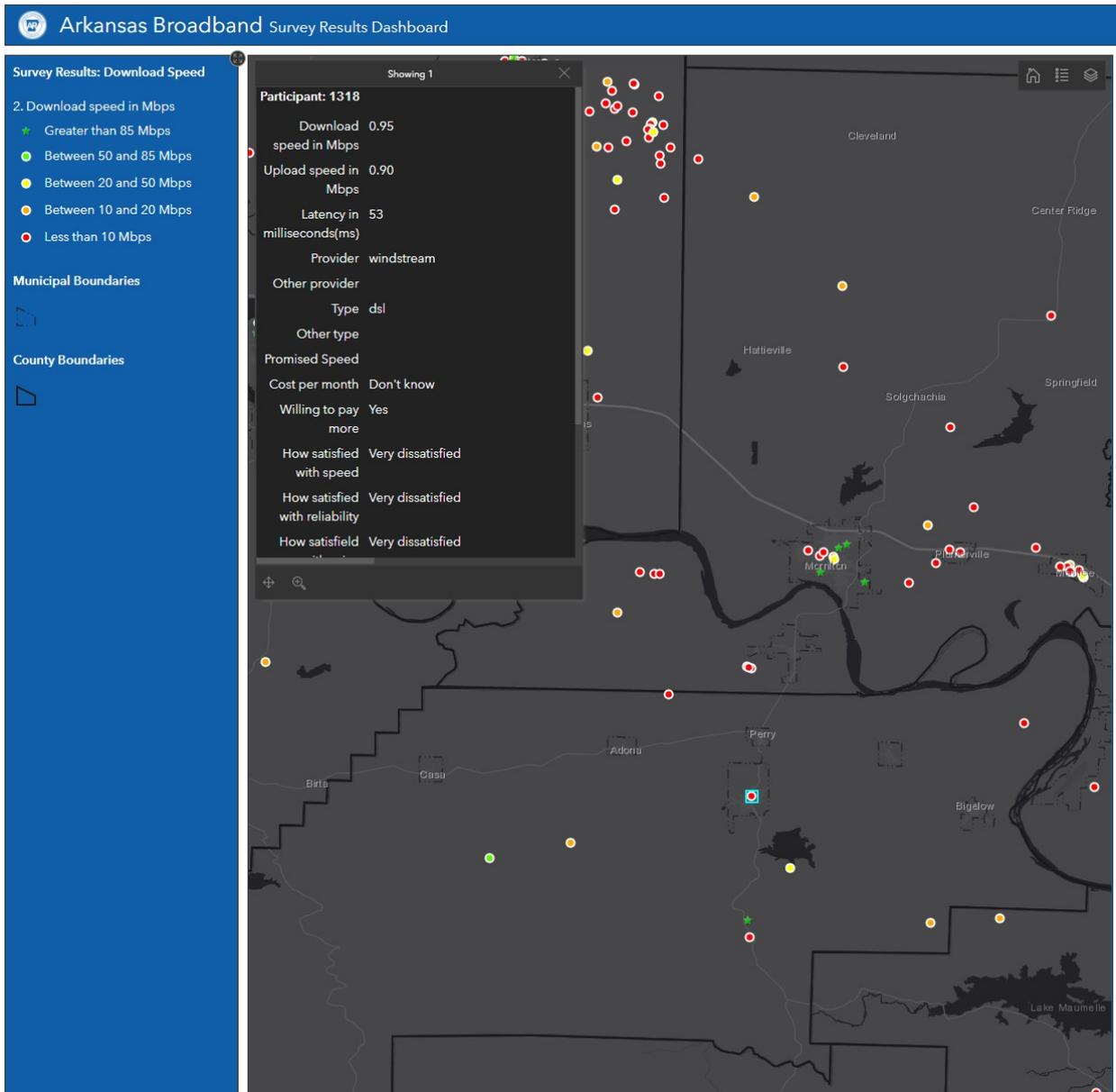
Percent of your proposed service area that is unserved by 25/3 broadband

This is the broadband coverage for Perry County:



According to the FCC, two or more providers offer 25/3 broadband to 23.08% of our county's residents. Three providers offer 25/3 broadband service to 76.92% of our county's residents.

The following map produced by the Arkansas State Broadband Office depicts actual speed tests from citizens of Perry County. While there are a few results that indicate acceptable download speeds, the individual was very displeased with price and would pay more for better service. Some of the results in downtown Perryville, as shown in the map below, fall well short of the advertised speed and do not align with what is being reported to the FCC.



Total population, number of residents who are rural and urban

According to United States Census Bureau on 7/1/2019, Perry County had a population of 10,455 with incorporated cities of Perryville (County Seat) and Adona. The United States Census Bureau report of 2010 indicates that 100% of Perry County is considered rural.

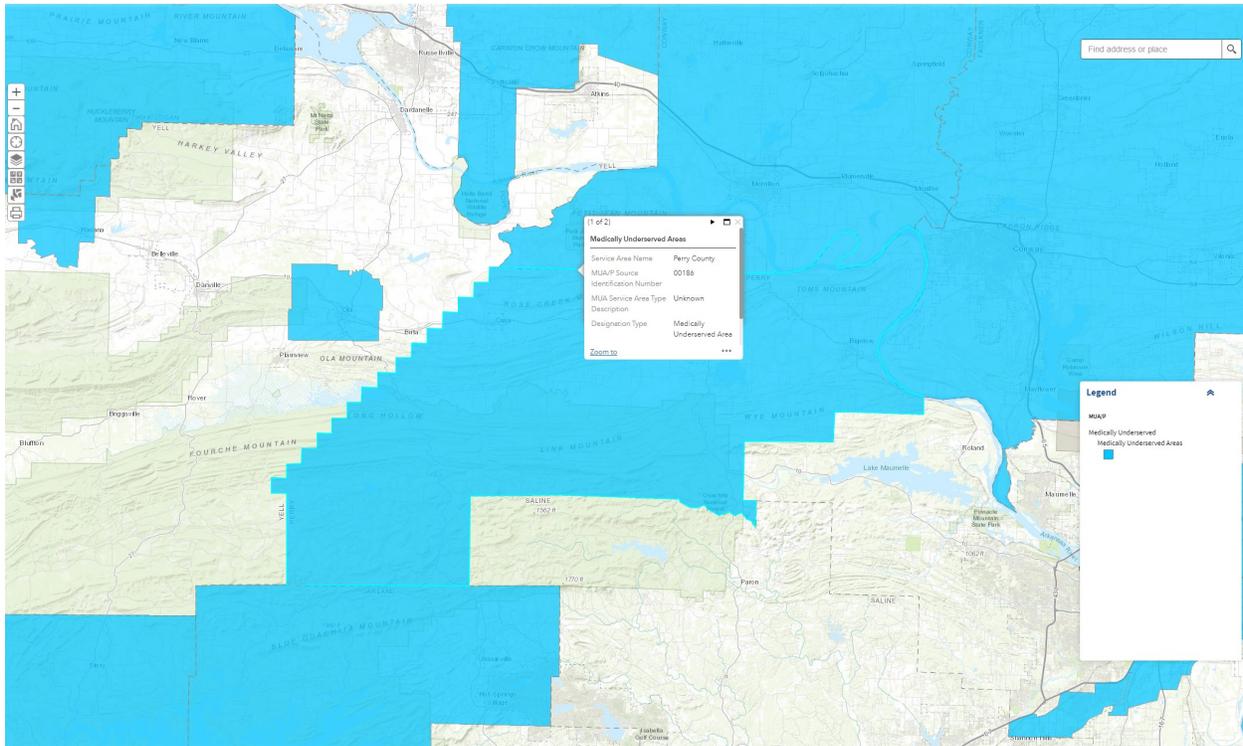
Percent of individuals in your proposed service area who are living in poverty

According to the Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE), 14.7% of Perry County individuals are considered to live in poverty.

Medically underserved

The below map from the HRSA website indicates all of Perry County is Medically Underserved.

Quick Maps - Medically Underserved Areas/Populations (MUA/P)



Discipline ⓘ	MUA/P ID ⓘ	Service Area Name ⓘ	Designation Type ⓘ	Primary State Name ⓘ	County ⓘ	Index of Medical Underservice Score ⓘ	Status ⓘ	Rural Status ⓘ	Designation Date ⓘ	Update Date ⓘ
Primary Care	00186	Perry County	Medically Underserved Area	Arkansas	Perry County, AR	42.6	Designated	Non-Rural	11/01/1978	11/01/1978

Description of need (up to 30 points)

Staffing needs:

The leaders of Perry County have no experience in broadband deployment. However, we do have experience in evaluating and hiring consultants and contractors, managing budgets, and completing projects in a timely manner. Perry County handles a budget of \$6,760,645.79 annually and manages \$400,000.00 existing contracts for consultants and other contractors.

Population needs:

According to the US Census Bureau QuickFacts, 20.5% of Perry County population is over the age of 65. Our county has a mix of 94.5% White, 2.0% Black or African American, 1.0% American Indian and Alaska Native, .4% Asian, 2.1% Two or More Races, and 3.1% Hispanic or Latino. Most of the county population (age 25+) have a High School diploma or greater

(83.4%). 11.9% (age 25+) hold a bachelor's degree or higher. The median household income for years 2014-2018 was \$46,071.00.

Broadband needs:

By looking at the broadband coverage in Perry County it appears that adequate (25/3) broadband service is available across the entire county and 100% is covered by at least 2 providers. However, it has been well documented that broadband speeds have been overstated in reports to the FCC for years and that these coverages and speeds are unreliable. The citizens of Perry County are in dire need of quality broadband service that exceeds the FCC minimum requirements of 25/3. With the recent events revolving around the COVID-19 Pandemic, the lack for bandwidth, broadband speed, and coverage has been exposed. Teachers, students, employers, employees, and healthcare workers struggle to be able to utilize the online alternatives due to insufficient broadband availability. These are the reasons Perry County has taken the initiative to pursue grants such as the Rural ID Expenses Trust Fund.

Internet Service Provider relationship needs:

Perry County has had a longstanding relationship with First Electric Cooperative. In fact, First Electric has a district office in the County Seat, Perryville. Electric Cooperatives were created to provide electric service to those rural areas where large investor owned electric companies refused to go. Perry County feels very strong that if rural broadband is successful, it will be on the backs of those that brought electricity to rural America 80+ years ago. We are confident that by partnering with our local Electric Cooperative that we will help to extend high speed broadband to the rural areas of our county.

Financial needs:

Perry County officials do not have the expertise to begin a broadband project but a grant like this could help offset feasibility costs for a qualified Internet Service Provider. This grant would help identify the needed infrastructure, design, feasibility, and deployment schedule needed to extend broadband service throughout the county. We understand that there are federal grants available for broadband construction and expansion, and we feel that this grant may strategically position us to compete for these funds.

Community relationship needs:

Perry County is in dire need of quality rural broadband. Supporters for such an endeavor include farmers, businesses, schools, government agencies, medical clinics, and rural citizens of Perry County. Please see the attached letters of support.

Description of plan (up to 25 points)

Through this study, we plan to achieve the following:

- Contract with FECC and Connect 2 First Internet to educate our leaders of broadband options and develop strategies to extend broadband into rural Perry County.
- The feasibility study and design completed by FECC and Connect 2 First Internet are necessary components of their due diligence business study to bring broadband services to Perry County. To complete this, a low-level design is needed to identify the equipment, material, routes, and labor.

Our objectives and timeline are as follows:

Month 1 Objective – Launch Perry County Broadband Due Diligence Study

Month 1 Goals:

1. Meet with FECC and Connect 2 First Internet to review due diligence study
2. Contract FECC and Connect 2 First Internet to complete a low-level design
3. Assign a county official to document and create reports as needed to UAMS Institute for Digital Health & Innovation

Month 2 Objective – Make Decisions Related to the Broadband Due Diligence Study

Month 2 Goals:

1. Work with FECC and Connect 2 First on the low-level design
2. Continue holding meetings with FECC and Connect 2 First Internet

Month 3 Objective – Expanding Broadband Due Diligence

Month 3 Goals:

1. Continue holding meetings with FECC and Connect 2 First Internet

Month 4 Objective – Continuing Documenting Needs

Month 4 Goals:

1. Continue holding meetings with FECC and Connect 2 First Internet
2. Receive monthly update about low-level design

Month 5 Objective – Sharing Documented Needs

Month 5 Goals:

1. Share the first draft of the Perry County low-level design and UAMS Institute for Digital Health & Innovation
2. Make revisions as needed
3. Continue holding meetings with the FECC and Connect 2 First Internet
4. Receive monthly update about low-level design

Month 6 Objective – Receive Findings of the Feasibility Study

Month 6 Goals:

1. Share final draft of the low-level design with Perry County Judge’s Office and UAMS Institute for Digital Health & Innovation
2. Determine next steps for further broadband grants, loans, or other necessary steps

Final Products:

1. Low-level design for broadband deployment in FECC service areas inside Perry County.

While we are not familiar with the available broadband grants and programs, we are confident, that FECC and Connect 2 First Internet are in tune with that landscape and will work with us to pursue those opportunities.

Budget

Budget Categories	Cost
Personnel	\$5,400
Supplies	\$600
Contractual	\$69,000
Total Request	\$75,000

Budget Justification (up to 15 points):

Personnel:

Project Director – Annual Salary \$41,170.00. Our County Judge will act as Project Director, serving as key liaison to the funders and media. He will coordinate meetings and make final decisions on all contractors. Our County Judge will spend an estimated half a day a week on this project for six months, accounting for ~6% of his annual salary. Request: \$2,400

Financial Director – Annual Salary \$35,469.00. Our County Judge Administrative Assistant will act as the Financial Director to this project, securing the surety bond and making financial arrangements for all contractors. They will ensure timelines, objectives, and goals are met, providing troubleshooting as necessary to solve problems while working alongside our Project Director. The County Judge Administrative Assistant will spend an estimated one day weekly on this project for six months, accounting for ~8.5% of their annual salary. Request: \$3,000.

Supplies:

Perry County will need office supplies (printing paper, printer ink, folders, postage, etc.), bottled water, and other sundry supplies for its Taskforce meetings. An allowance of \$100 per month is requested to cover these needs. Request: \$600

Contractual:

Feasibility Study Contractor, Broadband Consultant, Needs Assessment Author: FECC and Connect 2 First Internet will be the Internet Service Provider to conduct a low-level design to expand its services to our area. They will also provide any consulting work or outsource to another broadband consulting firm if additional research is required. This contractor will conduct market research, engage partners, model/design the network, and conduct a cost analysis and business plan. FECC and Connect 2 First Internet has informed us that to conduct this study, they need at least three months and \$69,000. We feel this amount will compensate another ISP or electric cooperative should we decide to pursue another feasibility study contractor. Request: \$69,000

Supporting Documents (up to 10 bonus points):

See Letters Below:

City of Perryville

613 North Fourche Avenue
Post Office Box 116
Perryville, Arkansas 72126
Phone 501-889-2862 or 501-889-2501
Fax 501-889-2496

December 1, 2020

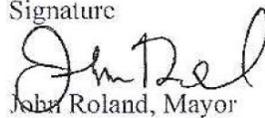
Re: Broadband support letter

Dear Judge:

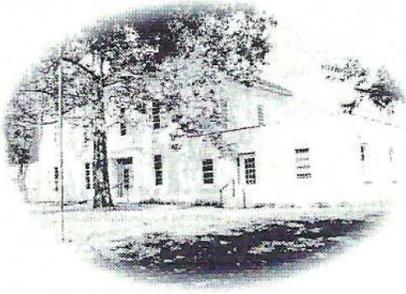
I have been the Mayor of Perryville for 6 years, and in this time, it has become apparent to me that Perryville/Perry County needs more technological resources to bring to its residents. Broadband is so often thought of for entertainment – gaming and movies, but it is an essential utility for e-commerce for our small businesses, a means of learning for our students, a method of continuing education for our adult learners, and a way of bringing healthcare into our community and homes. Without good broadband, Perryville/Perry County cannot reasonably grow. In essence, we are cut off from the rest of the world. I also believe some of our residents, perhaps those who are older adults, should learn about this technology and decide whether and how to embrace the technology in their daily lives. Broadband is a utility that we just can't live without any longer in Perryville/Perry County. I feel the Rural Broadband I.D. Trust Fund grant is a possible avenue for us to collect our thoughts, prepare for a larger broadband grant, and align with an ISP or electric cooperative to plan and eventually implement a long-term plan for improved broadband.

Respectfully,

Signature

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "John Roland".

John Roland, Mayor



TOBY DAVIS

PERRY COUNTY JUDGE

310 West Main Street
P.O. Box 358
Perryville, AR 72126
Phone: (501) 889-5128
pcjudge1@windstream.net

Re: Broadband support letter

To whom it may concern:

I have been the Perry County Judge for several years, and in this time, it has become apparent to me that Perry County needs more technological resources to bring to its residents. Broadband is so often thought of for entertainment – gaming and movies, but it is an essential utility for e-commerce for our small businesses, a means of learning for our students, a method of continuing education for our adult learners, and a way of bringing healthcare into our community and homes. Without good broadband, Perry County cannot reasonably grow. In essence, we are cut off from the rest of the world. I also believe some of our residents, perhaps those who are older adults, should learn about this technology and decide whether and how to embrace the technology in their daily lives. Broadband is a utility that we just can't live without any longer in Perry County. I feel the Rural Broadband I.D. Trust Fund grant is a possible avenue for us to collect our thoughts, prepare for a larger broadband grant, and align with an ISP or electric cooperative to plan and eventually implement a long-term plan for improved broadband.

Thank you, for the consideration of this request. Should you have any questions or concerns regarding this matter, please contact my office at pcjudge1@windstream.net, or by calling me at my office at 501-889-5128.

Respectfully,

Toby L. Davis
Perry County Judge