

From: [Natalie Wilson](#)
To: [Clerk](#)
Subject: April 13 Board of Commissioners Meeting - Broadband Inventory Survey Proposal
Date: Monday, April 12, 2021 10:54:47 PM

Re: Rural Broadband Inventory Survey Proposal

I am writing to encourage the Board of Commissioners to approve the April 6, 2021 proposal by DCS Technology Design, LLC to conduct a Rural Broadband Inventory Survey, including the optional services of mapping the Digital Subscriber Line Active Multiplexers (DSLAMs) and preparing a System Engineering and Estimates analysis.

I am a resident of Kasson Township. I have no professional background or financial investment in the field, but I have been reading extensively about options for and issues surrounding broadband service in rural areas since I was appointed to our Planning Commission's Technical Advisory Committee last month. However, I am not speaking on behalf of that committee; in fact, I have yet to meet my fellow committee members. The opinions expressed here are my own.

It is widely acknowledged that broadband internet connection is a necessity for Leelanau County residents and businesses, and widely known that many of our residents and businesses are unserved or underserved. However, in order to solve the problem of no or inadequate broadband service, we need to know exactly where the problem exists on an address-level basis. There is high variability of available (or unavailable) services and performance across the county. As noted in DCS's proposal, existing information on service availability is too outdated and/or too imprecise to support developing actionable solutions now.

The data to be collected and compiled under the proposed Rural Broadband Inventory Survey will be of tremendous value in developing the types of well-defined, targeted "shovel ready" scopes of work that lead to successful project completions. These are also the projects most likely to win support in competitive grant funding frameworks. Address-level service data can also help the County attract private investments in our internet infrastructure because it will show where service and upgrades are needed, i.e., where a private company is most likely to find eager customers.

I further encourage the Board to authorize the optional service to map Digital Subscriber Line Active Multiplexers (DSLAMs). DSL internet connection is often the only option available to county residents that qualifies as "broadband", albeit by a woefully outdated standard. A household or business with only DSL connectivity available is most definitely underserved.

I am also in favor of including the System Engineering and Estimates component in the project. It is an efficient way to get site-specific information on options and feasibility from experts working in the public interest. This information will be invaluable in scoping, technology choices, and phasing of projects to expand and improve broadband access in the county.

Frankly, the Board is fortunate to have a sound proposal from a qualified contractor who can start work right away. Demand for these services is high because many communities have the same problems and needs as we do. Leelanau County needs this Rural Broadband Inventory Survey now so that we can position ourselves to take advantage of federal funding to support broadband internet expansion here while the opportunities are available. Investment in this work will undoubtedly allow us to save money by targeting broadband expansion projects more efficiently and accelerate the timeline for real improvement in access and services for residents and businesses.

Thank you for your consideration.

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