

From: William Niemuth [bill@loss-mitigation.com]

Sent: 9/10/2024, 11:45 PM

To: bead@ntia.gov

Subject: NTIA Seeks Comment on Guidance for Eligible Entities on Choosing Alternative Broadband Technologies for BEAD Program - Vilas County, Wisconsin Comment

Dear NTIA Representative,

I am a Director for the Vilas County Economic Development Corporation and its Broadband Expansion leader. For the past five years we have developed strategies and executed projects expanding fiber optic high-speed broadband access to homes and businesses throughout Vilas County. We have a long history of success and only 13% of our BSLs are eligible for BEAD funding because of our hard work.

Today, I am sharing comment on the alternative broadband technologies for the BEAD program.

Fixed wireless, especially in heavily forested and challenging terrain, is not a good investment because line of sight is required for it to work at minimum speeds. This type of wireless technology is also affected by weather conditions. I recommend it be a very last option to be funded by BEAD.

LEO, specifically Starlink, which is the only existing LEO high-speed solution available to consumers, is a terrific performer. Members of the Vilas County Economic Development Corporation Broadband Workgroup started testing Starlink in late 2020 with outstanding results. Since then, numerous Vilas County stakeholders have moved to Starlink. Other than fiber connections, Vilas County broadband surveys show Starlink is the technology with the highest upload and download speeds.

In areas where fiber is cost prohibitive, LEO Broadband, and specifically Starlink, should be eligible for funding.

Questions? Please ask.

Thank you.

Bill Niemuth

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