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# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 15, 2010

The Honorable Gary Locke  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Ave. NW  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Locke:

As the National Telecommunications Information Administration considers Round 2 applications for the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) as funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, it is my pleasure to strongly support the "Ohio Middle Mile Consortium" (OMMC).

The OMMC consists of three proposals that target middle mile expansion throughout the state of Ohio. While each proposal stands on its own merits, the collaborative effort is designed to provide service to an estimated 3.6 million households, more than 534,000 businesses, and nearly 6,000 anchor institutions. The collaborative proposal also aims to create more than 1,500 jobs in an economic climate and region of the country where such job creation is crucial.

The proposals included in the collaborative effort are: 1) *Connecting Appalachian Ohio* (ID#6233), 2) *Transforming NE Ohio: From Rust Belt to Tech Powerhouse* (ID# 4395), and *GigEPAC – GigPLUS Availability Coalition* (ID# 7296).

*Connecting Appalachian Ohio* is led by Horizon Telecom and involves the expansion of middle mile broadband coverage throughout 34 counties in Appalachia. It is my understanding that 31 of these counties qualify as underserved and are considered to be economically distressed. Thirteen counties have unemployment rates at least 3.5% above the national average. The project would deploy more than 1,900 miles of fiber optic network to pass 705,000 households and connect nearly 600 community anchors. The proposal has unwavering support in the Appalachian region from all sectors.

If awarded funding, *Connecting Appalachian Ohio* will not only bring technological advancement in a region that has suffered from inadequate broadband service, but will create more than 700 direct, indirect, and induced jobs while also providing critical educational, infrastructure, and economic development resources to rural Ohioans. The project represents an unprecedented level of cooperation that will lay the foundation for economic growth in the Appalachian region for many years to come.

*Transforming NE Ohio: From Rust Belt to Tech Powerhouse* is led by One Community and involves the expansion of broadband services throughout 20 counties in Northeast Ohio, a region that has been severely impacted by the economic challenges that face our nation's automotive and manufacturing sectors. The project would pass more than 2 million households and 210,000 businesses, while creating nearly 500 jobs in Northeast Ohio. An investment in broadband infrastructure will provide a backbone to accelerate economic development in the industrial region.

*GigEPAC*, led by Com Net Inc. proposes a public-private partnership among three existing network providers to address the lack of adequate broadband service for rural communities throughout 28 counties in Western Ohio. Twenty three counties in the region have a child poverty rate of 10% or worse and 21 counties have been adversely affected by automotive restructuring. It is my understanding that if awarded funding the project would create more than 300 direct, indirect, and induced jobs and provide affordable rates for more than 30,000 un-served households by constructing more than 700 miles of fiber optic cable.

All three proposals have a large amount of support in Ohio, and represent an unprecedented collaborative effort in the spirit of 1) obtaining adequate broadband service in the state; 2) creating critically needed jobs; and 3) strengthening Ohio's technological platform to unleash widespread, sustainable economic development.

The OMMC holds tremendous promise for our state and for the future of broadband connectivity, and I urge the NTIA to give it serious consideration.

Thank you for your continued efforts to support broadband infrastructure in America.

Sincerely,



Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator

Cc: Lawrence Strickling, Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information