

AMENDING THE 2022 BUDGET AND AWARDING A CONTRACT FOR A BROADBAND
INFRASTRUCTURE ENGINEERING ASSESSMENT AND COORDINATION OF
IMPLEMENTATION OF FIBER BROADBAND THROUGHOUT DANE COUNTY.

Broadband access is a top priority for residents, businesses, and government at the national, state, and local levels. While much of Dane County is well-served with broadband, there are areas in the county that are underserved. The Public Service Commission (PSC) defines underserved as an area served by fewer than two providers offering “broadband service”, which commonly refers to high-speed internet access that is always on and faster than the traditional dial-up access, and has at least a speed of 25 megabits for download and 3 megabits for upload. Broadband includes several high-speed transmission technologies such as DSL, cable modem, fiber, wireless, satellite, and broadband over powerlines (BPL).

On November 9, 2021 Governor Evers announced that the Public PSC will make \$100 million available for the next round of the State Broadband Expansion Grant Program. The Broadband Expansion Grant program was created in 2013 to help meet the demand for improved broadband and encourage development in Wisconsin’s unserved and underserved areas.

Per the PSC, eligible applicants include an organization, a telecommunications utility, or a city, village, town, or county that has established a legal partnership or joint venture arrangement with an otherwise qualified organization or telecommunications utility, and as such meets the eligibility requirements set forth in [Wis. Stat. § 196.504\(1\)](#). Matching funds for the grants are not required, but have been identified as a priority factor.

In 2021 Dane County received \$106 million allocation of the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). These funds can be used for infrastructure improvements, which includes broadband expansion. Funds must be allocated by December 31, 2024, with projects completed by December 31, 2026. Dane County identified broadband expansion as a priority for use of ARPA, setting aside \$5 million for this purpose.

The Dane County Broadband Task Force, created via 2020 RES-415, has been addressing gaps in broadband service in Dane County, and aims to support municipalities as they prepare to seek grants to develop a more robust broadband network that adequately serves the entire county. As part of their research, the Task Force examined several examples of broadband studies and infrastructure engineering assessments conducted in other counties in the state of Wisconsin.

The Task Force has determined that a professional broadband infrastructure engineering assessment will provide technical information that will help the county be successful at improving broadband service throughout Dane County. The goals of the study would be to: understand what is currently available, where the existing infrastructure serves, what is the capacity and who owns the infrastructure; identify voids or deficiencies in service; and recommend options for providing service in both the short and long term. In addition to providing

46 technical information, the consultant will serve as a ‘coordinator’ managing the interaction
47 between all stakeholder groups to coordinate and develop the broadband fiber network in Dane
48 County. This includes helping local communities in project development and grants, as well as
49 working with ISPs in coordinating public private partnerships and assistance with grant funding.
50

51 **Whether and how the funding responds to the COVID-19 pandemic**

52 The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the need to have affordable, reliable internet in every
53 home and business to attend virtual school, do online banking, and attend healthcare
54 appointments virtually to name a few.
55

56 **Whether the allocation is duplicative of other federal/state/local/school funding efforts or
57 in coordination with them**

58 There are a variety of state and federal grants available for broadband expansion. In order to
59 apply for these grants, there needs to be accurate data that shows unserved and underserved
60 areas. The current maps created by the FCC do not show an accurate representation of where
61 service is and is not.
62

63 **Whether the allocation leverages existing partnerships and Dane County programs**

64 The Broadband Task Force is staffed by both the County Board Office, the Extension Office,
65 and Planning staff.
66

67 **Reference to the law and/or guidance that authorizes the allocation**

68 [§ 35.6\(e\)\(2\)](#) Indicates that a recipient may use funds to make investments in broadband.
69

70 **An explanation of expected outcomes, including equity measures**

71 The infrastructure engineering assessment will be used by the Broadband Task Force to inform
72 recommendations to the County to improve broadband access for county residents.
73

74 **A plan for data collection and other outcome measures that ensure accurate quarterly
75 reporting of program experience and outcomes**

76 Progress toward implementing recommendations made in the infrastructure engineering
77 assessment will be reported as the project develops.
78

79 The American Rescue Plan Act’s funding is able to be used for broadband expansion. As the
80 world has learned throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, internet access is no longer optional, it
81 is a necessity to complete many day-to-day tasks.
82

83
84 **NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the following amendment be made to the 2022
85 operating budget in the Department of Planning & Development:
86

87 PDPLNDIV NEW “Broadband Engineering Assessment” \$ 411,780

88 PDPLNDIV 81367 “ARPA Revenue” \$ 411,780
89

90 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, the County Board approves a contract with **AECOM**
91 **Technical Services, Inc.** in the amount of \$411,780 to conduct a broadband infrastructure

92 **assessment and provide broadband coordination services and that the County Executive**
93 **and County Clerk are authorized to execute the contract, and**

94

95 **BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that the County Board requests the broadband engineering
96 assessment be shared with members of the County Board and the Dane County Broadband
97 Task Force upon completion.