

Broadband - immediate advocacy opportunity to the County Commissioners.

Rice Lake, Gnesen, and Lakewood are working together in an effort to bring fiber-to-the-home broadband service to our communities. We now have accurate cost estimates for a fiber deployment in each community, varying from \$2.5M to \$4.5M per community depending on coverage and number of homes served (running fiber from the fiber trunk to the home is a significant expense). The point is that the expense for each community is in the millions of dollars, requiring us to participate in grant proposals.

St. Louis County will have approximately \$54M available through the American Rescue Plan (ARP), with broadband an allowed use of those funds. The County Commissioners may vote as soon as next Tuesday (June 22) on the allocation of ARP funds. One proposal on the table is to spend 10% of the \$54M on broadband. \$5.4M does not accomplish much in resolving the broadband deficiency in St. Louis County.

County Commissioner Musolf needs our backing to make a strong case to the County Commissioners for a more robust commitment of County ARP funds to broadband. Please consider making a phone call (preferred by Commissioner Musolf) and/or writing an email which:

- describes the issues you face due to the lack of adequate broadband at home or in your business;
- encourages the County Commissioners to allocate a substantial chunk of the County ARP funds to broadband grants.

It would also be useful to copy the Duluth-based Commissioners on your emails. Duluth is dependent on us for a significant portion of their students and workforce. If we cannot perform adequately due to inferior broadband, Duluth suffers.

This link contains County Commissioner contact information:

<https://www.stlouiscountymn.gov/our-county/board-of-commissioners/members>

It is extremely challenging to obtain broadband funds through grant applications to the State and Federal Governments. This County grant opportunity is closer to home. Your rapid input may have substantial impact on the percentage of County ARP funds allocated for broadband. In addition, it may give us a competitive edge in the County when grants are actually awarded to communities.