GRAFTON COUNTY SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATION PUBLIC HEARING
Department of Corrections
North Haverhill, NH 03774
October 12, 2023

PRESENT: see the attached sign-in sheet

9:05 AM Rep. Sykes opened the public hearing on the Supplemental Appropriation needed for the NTIA Broadband Grant.

Jake Loghry and Kyle Hilderbrand from EX2 Technologies presented the attached handout on the Open Access Middle-Mile Fiber Optic Network as proposed and approved for the NTIA Grant.

Rep. Berezhny asked if hooking up each town to the network was included in the grant and what the towns needed to do to access the network. J. Loghry explained that what is included in this grant is to build into the town halls for each town on the list and have connectivity to provide service into those town halls. This will initially be used to service public infrastructure, but if a service provider is interested in providing high-speed internet to that community, they could use that point as a place to tie into the network. He noted that this is the goal of this project, to make it easy for the service providers to build out to the communities.

The Delegation members asked many questions regarding the ongoing costs to the towns once this network is built out. J. Loghry explained that each town can be addressed differently. It will be up to the service provider that wants to provide the service to that community and the agreement that the town makes with that provider. There is maintenance that will come along with these network switches that are in the town hall. J. Loghry noted that these network switches are very small systems.

J. Loghry explained that there is also BEAD Funding, which is the next layer of federal grants that will be coming out. These funds are only for final-mile projects for rural and underserved communities. A private entity can apply for these grants to help build out broadband to the towns, and there are millions of dollars available through that funding. K. Hilderbrand added that the final mile designs are complete for each town. The towns have access to these designs that they can then leverage to attract providers, as the barrier for the middle mile entry and the barrier for having to pay for a last mile design will be taken care of. E. Morris, Broadband Committee Member, and Enfield Town Manager added that they need a middle mile and last mile network. Building this middle mile network helps set up for the last mile expansion. The Broadband Committee has communicated with internet service providers interested in partnering to build out the last mile. He also noted the possibility of leasing fibers to connect the broken loops or trading fibers to make this a more robust network for Grafton County. Broadband Committee member Tim Egan also added that he has been in communication with internet service providers who are interested in being a part of the last mile projects within Grafton County. These vendors are interested in this project because it will make their job easier and faster. This will also allow these companies to make the BEAD money they have received go further in building out the last mile to the communities.

Many questions were also asked about the changes made to the original proposed project and the fact that this project is no longer a complete loop throughout the County. J. Loghry explained that all the black lines on the attached map that are labeled not included were included in the original project, but because they had some level of previous federal funding, they had to be removed from this project. He explained that EX2 has not confirmed if those lines have been built. The plan is to figure out how to complete those connections to offer services to the rest of the communities that were not on the original list. K. Hilderbrand added that he had a conversation with Fiber Light, who was able to confirm fiber capacity in some of those locations, and they have an interest in trying to figure out how to partner with the County to connect these communities.

Members of the Broadband Committee and EX2 answered questions from the Delegation and members of the public regarding redundancy with other existing network lines and projects that are already in the works from other providers. Questions were asked if they are asking taxpayers to fund duplication of infrastructure. J. Loghry explained that they do not know what every other private company that operates throughout the County has. He stated that the way it normally works is that when a company places a pole, they have a joint-use agreement, and other people are allowed to place infrastructure on those poles. When EX2 builds on a pole, they are going next to another entity that has cable on that line, but they do not know what is in that cable. They are unaware of what is available, how many strands it is, if that company is trying to sell those lines, or if it is for private use. He explained that just because there is a cable already there does not mean it is accessible to the County. J. Loghry also added that the strand count the County is looking to build out is much larger than other cables they are laying next to to allow for expansion in the future, and, likely, those smaller lines on the poles are already utilized.

Rep. Stringham stated there would be a charge to connect to the middle mile network. He asked who regulates those costs, who receives the money, who sets the rates, and if this will need to be added to a town or County budget. K. Hilderbrand explained that regarding educating the entities interested in using this, EX2 will help make recommendations to the County as to what those rates need to be. They will then provide a sample agreement that the County can utilize to facilitate that transaction. Once that agreement is in place, EX2 will help with the day-to-day administrative tasks. As far as the money, the County would be receiving that money, and that would help offset any future maintenance costs.

E. Morris explained that the Broadband Committee uses the Town of Bristol's model for this project. With the Town of Bristol's partnership with Hub 66 and UNH, there is a cost to the town for the internet, but they were able to negotiate a cost well below market value.

Members from EX2 and the Broadband Committee answered questions regarding the ongoing line maintenance and, for example, who is responsible for repairing lines if a tree falls on them. K. Hilderbrand stated that these fibers are on existing poles with reputable power providers. Those poles will go back up, and if there are specific things that need to happen to hook the cable back up, that will need to happen, but there are many models that can get that done. E. Morris explained that in Bristol, which is the model the County is following, they created an agreement that Hub 66 would continue to develop the infrastructure but would also maintain the infrastructure that the Town of Bristol built. E. Morris explained that the Broadband Committee

is looking to do the same in partnering with companies and having them be responsible for maintaining the middle mile. In the end run of the Town of Bristol model, there is a transfer of ownership, after so many years, to Hub 66. The Broadband Committee will continue to investigate this model to ensure that the County is not responsible for the maintenance of these lines.

Members from EX2 and the Broadband Committee answered further questions from the Delegation and members of the public.

10:21 AM Rep. Sykes closed the public hearing.

Respectfully Submitted,

Heather Baldwin, Clerk

GRAFTON COUNTY
Incorporated 1769

NTIA Grant
Open Access Middle-Mile Fiber Optic Network
October 12, 2023

eX²
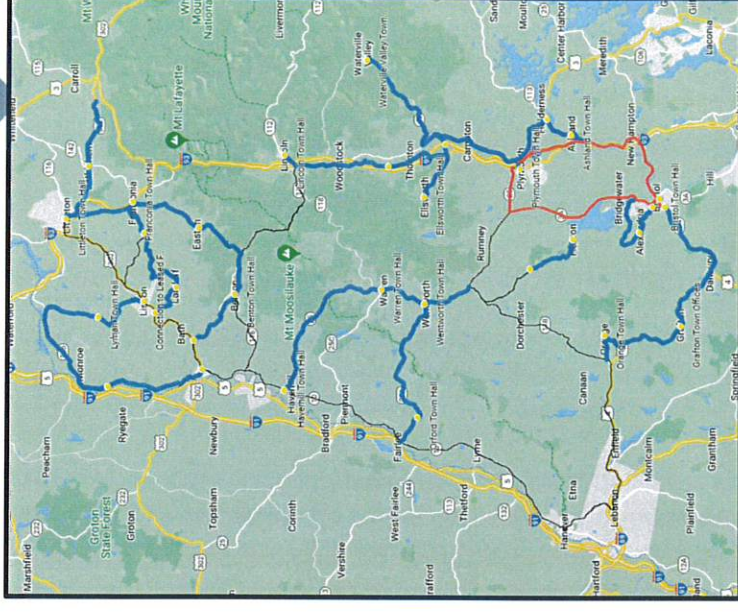EXCELLENCE IN
EXECUTION.
A Vivacity Company

Network Overview

Open Access Middle Mile Network

- ❖ NTIA Grant Award of over $11M
- ❖ Over 200 miles of newly constructed fiber cable
- ❖ Mostly aerial cable installed on existing pole infrastructure
- ❖ All installed backbone cable will be 144 strand single mode fiber
- ❖ Multiple internet tie points available for redundant internet connections
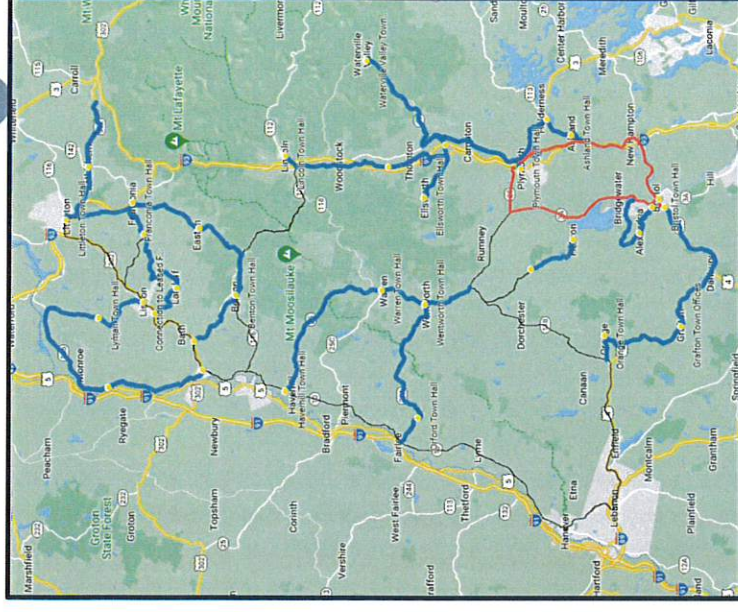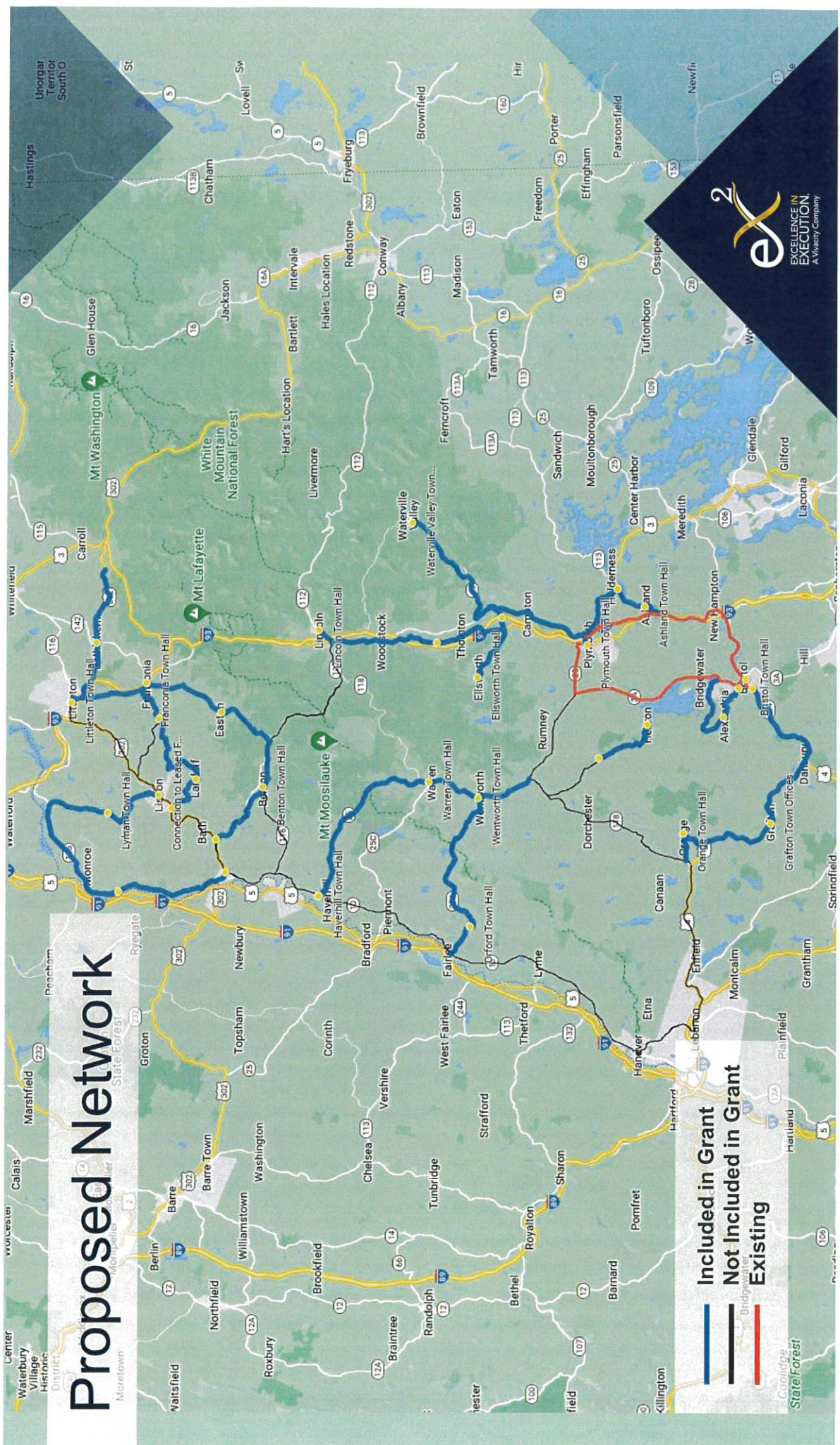
End Point Connections

- ❖ 24 Municipal Town Halls directly connected to backbone
- ❖ Offers multiple "on/off" ramps for service providers interested in servicing underserved areas
- ❖ Reduces the cost to entry of new markets for internet service providers which helps make rural markets more economically feasible

e²X

EXCELLENCE IN EXECUTION.
A Vivacity Company

Town Hall Connections

LOCATION	ADDRESS	TOWN/CITY	ZIP
Alexandria Town Hall	47 Washburn Road	Alexandria	03222
Ashland Town Hall	20 Highland Street	Ashland	03217
Benton Town Hall	221 Coventry Road	Benton	03785
Bethlehem Town Hall	2155 Main Street	Bethlehem	03574
Campton Town Office	12 Gearty Way	Campton	03223
Easton Town Hall	1060 Easton Valley Road	Easton	03580
Ellsworth Town Hall	3 Ellsworth Pond	Ellsworth	03223
Franconia Town Hall	421 Main Street	Franconia	03580
Grafton Town Office	E Grafton Road	Grafton	03240
Groton Town Hall	754 North Groton Road	Groton	03241
Haverhill Town Hall	2975 Dartmouth College Hwy	Haverhill	03774
Holderness Town Hall	1089 US-3	Holderness	03245
Landaff Town Hall	12 Center Hill Road	Landaff	03585
Lincoln Town Hall	148 Main Street	Lincoln	03251
Littleton Town Hall	230 W Main Street	Littleton	03561
Lyman Town Office	65 Parker Hill Road	Lyman	03585
Lisbon Town Hall	46 School Street	Lisbon	03585
Monroe Town Hall	152 Woodsville Road	Monroe	03771
Orange Municipal Building	8 Town House Road	Orange	03741
Orford Town Hall	2529 NH-25A	Orford	03777
Sugar Hill Town Hall	1411 NH Route 117	Sugar Hill	03586
Thornton Town Hall	16 Merrill Access Road	Thornton	03285
Warren Town Hall	8 Water Street	Warren	03279
Wentworth Town Hall	7 Atwell Hill Road	Wentworth	03282

Proposed Network

Legend:
- Included in Grant (blue)
- Not Included in Grant (black)
- Existing (red)