



COUNTY OF ERIE

MARK C. POLONCARZ
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

June 19, 2015

Erie County Legislature
92 Franklin Street – Fourth Floor
Buffalo, New York 14202

Re: Funding for Broadband Internet Feasibility Study

Dear Honorable Members:

The Erie County Department of Environment and Planning requests authorization to conduct a request for proposals and retain a consultant to conduct a feasibility study of broadband Internet access in Erie County.

Should your Honorable Body require further information, I encourage you to contact the Department of Environment and Planning. Thank you for your consideration on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark C. Poloncarz".

Mark C. Poloncarz, Esq.
Erie County Executive

MCP/tcc
Enclosure

MEMORANDUM

To: Honorable Members of the Erie County Legislature
From: Department of Environment and Planning
Re: Funding for Broadband Internet Feasibility Study
Date: July 9, 2015

SUMMARY

The Erie County Department of Environment and Planning requests authorization to transfer funding in order to conduct a request for proposals and retain a consultant to conduct a feasibility study of broadband Internet access in Erie County.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The cost of the study will be no more than \$63,000. Funding is available from 2015 savings in the Medicaid-MMIS account based on state adjustments and guidance for the County's 2015 fiscal year. The County is also exploring state funding through the Consolidated Funding Application ("CFA") process of the New York State Regional Economic Development Council competition. In addition, potential funds may be available from National Grid and other sources.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

The funding adjustment will provide the necessary resources to undertake a Broadband Feasibility Analysis. This will examine gaps in service within Erie County, a review of peer community approaches to broadband inadequacies, and a resource inventory of broadband physical infrastructure. The recommendation also responds directly to the County Legislative resolution passed on June 25, 2015 wherein the Legislature encouraged the County Executive to proceed with a feasibility study as described above as soon as possible.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A fiber network could prove to be a regional asset that improves the quality of education, public safety, social justice and economic development.

In the Initiatives for Stronger Communities program, the County has publicly committed to the goal of increasing broadband access. The Erie County Legislature unanimously supported the exploration of a fiber optic broadband network in Erie County which resulted in the formation of the Erie County Municipal Broadband Committee which created a document highlighting the benefits of a municipal network as well as the challenges associated with such a network. After consulting with telecommunications professionals, the committee opined that a feasibility study was the next step toward making a fiber optic network a reality as well as the needed creation of an asset map of the fiber cables that already exist in our region.

While such a study is conducted, the County is exploring additional funding through the Consolidated Funding Application (“CFA”) process of the New York State Regional Economic Development Council competition.

CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION

The County will not study the possibility of further broadband Internet access to the wider community thus continuing the information shortfall the region has in this area. This would impact the County by reducing educational, career, workforce and social opportunities for area residents.

STEPS FOLLOWING APPROVAL

The Department of Environment and Planning will conduct a request for proposals, determine the appropriate respondent.

A RESOLUTION SUBMITTED BY
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING

RE: Funding for Broadband Internet Feasibility Study

WHEREAS, a recent report from the Erie County Committee charged with exploring broadband issues present in Erie County has identified a variety of problems ranging from poor internet speed to non-existent service in rural areas; and

WHEREAS, a weak fiber optic broadband network limits the region's economic development opportunities in the growing technology market; and

WHEREAS, a strong fiber network could prove to be a regional asset that improves the quality of education, public safety, social justice and economic development; and

WHEREAS, the Erie County Legislature unanimously supported the exploration of a fiber optic broadband network in Erie County which resulted in the formation of the Erie County Municipal Broadband Committee which produced a document highlighting the benefits of a municipal network; and

WHEREAS, after consulting with telecommunications professionals the Committee recommended that the County conduct a feasibility study; and

WHEREAS, in the Initiatives for Stronger Communities, the County Executive publicly committed to the goal of increasing broadband access in Erie County.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED, that the Erie County Legislature hereby authorizes the County Executive and the Department of Environment and Planning to issue a request for proposals seeking a qualified consultant to undertake a feasibility study which would clearly define broadband service gaps, and prepare an action strategy to address such gaps moving forward; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the following budgetary adjustments to the 2015 Budget are hereby authorized in order to provide funding for the retention of a consultant and creation of a feasibility study of a fiber optic broadband network in Erie County:

Fund 110 - 2015 Budget	
16200 – Department of Environment and Planning	
Expense Accounts	Increase/ (Decrease)
516020 Professional Svcs	
Contracts and Fees	\$ 63,000

Total \$63,000

Fund 110 - 2015 Budget
120- Social Services

<u>Expense Account</u>	<u>Increase/ (Decrease)</u>
525000 MMIS Medicaid Local Share	(\$63,000)
Total	(63,000)

and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Division of Budget and Management is authorized to make the necessary budgetary transfers to provide funding for the feasibility study; and be it further

RESOLVED, that certified copies of this resolution will be forwarded to the County Executive, the Office of the Comptroller, the Division of Information and Support Services, the Department of Environment and Planning and the Division of Budget and Management.