



EASTGATE

Regional Council of Governments

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

ACTIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS TO DEVELOP THE LAKE TO RIVER BROADBAND CORRIDOR

RFI ISSUE DATE: April 19, 2024

RFI RESPONSE DEADLINE: June 3, 2024

I. BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

A. FEASIBILITY STUDY

The Eastgate Regional Council of Governments hereby referred to as “**Eastgate**”, is an association of local governments in Northeast Ohio’s Ashtabula, Mahoning, and Trumbull counties (the “**Eastgate Region**”). In 2020, Eastgate commissioned a study to investigate and recommend a means of providing reliable, high-speed broadband internet for the region (the “**Feasibility Study**”). The Feasibility Study, completed in 2021, found a lack of access to broadband services and recommended the build-out of fiber optic cable-based connectivity for residents and businesses in the region. The Feasibility Study is attached hereto and incorporated by reference as **Exhibit A**.

B. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Eastgate sought to advance the Feasibility Study and commissioned an Implementation Plan published in July 2023 (“**Implementation Plan**”). The Implementation Plan, attached hereto and incorporated by reference as **Exhibit B**, built upon the Feasibility Study to create a suggested proposal for a potential build-out of an open access middle-mile fiber optic cable backbone within the Eastgate Region and Columbiana County. The Implementation Plan suggested that a middle-mile fiber network be constructed along State Route 11 (“**SR-11**”) utilizing the Ohio Department of Transportation (“**ODOT**”) right-of-way (“**ROW**”) from the approximate limits of Lake Erie (Ashtabula County) to the Ohio River (Columbiana County). This potential build-out is known as the “**Lake To River**” corridor and is depicted below in **Exhibit C**.

C. REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

At this juncture, Eastgate now seeks to issue this Request for Information (“**RFI**”) to learn about a respondent’s approach to building an approximate middle-mile fiber path along the Lake to River corridor and how that approach might further Eastgate’s goals of ensuring that residents, businesses, and visitors to the communities it serves have access to market-leading broadband services. To that end, Eastgate will utilize responses to this RFI to help gauge the level of interest to collaborate with Eastgate to expand broadband infrastructure throughout the Eastgate region.

II. HIGH-LEVEL OBJECTIVES

Eastgate’s end goal is to bring reliable, high-speed broadband internet access to residents, businesses, and key project stakeholders in the region to eliminate the current digital divide. Eastgate seeks ideas and interest from all entities regarding how to bring higher-speed broadband to the Lake to River corridor and will explore all opportunities to do so.

Ideally, the proposed network would provide fiber-based connectivity to the region of Northeastern / Eastern Ohio in proximity to SR-11 based upon the development of the

Implementation Plan where coordination between Eastgate and ODOT took place to facilitate the use of SR-11 right of way (ROW). That being said, **it is not a requirement to propose a build-out along SR-11 and utilize the ODOT ROW**. Eastgate is open to all potential solutions that will maximize private investment, as well as utilize state and federal broadband funding while providing reliable and high-quality services to meet its citizens' needs.

Furthermore, **it is not a requirement to utilize the Feasibility Study or Implementation Plan** – these documents are being provided as resources and can certainly be taken into consideration as a respondent drafts its RFI response.

Ideally, the middle-mile fiber network would be open access and available for last-mile providers to establish a connection, leading to a reduction in price for last-mile connectivity, and greatly enhancing broadband coverage and connection speeds across the region. This proposed build-out benefits Eastgate, ODOT, local businesses, community institutions, residents, and the Project Stakeholders while accommodating potential future growth and technology needs.

Respondents may propose a fiber-only, wireless-only, or hybrid solution for Eastgate's consideration. Given the topography, demographics, population density, and existing infrastructure within the Eastgate Region, we are certainly open to a hybrid fiber/wireless deployment, which may be the most cost- and time-effective solution to meeting local connectivity needs in the short- and long-term.

We welcome the responses of all prospective partners, including traditional ISPs, CLECs, LECs, data center services, as well as nonprofit organizations, public cooperatives, and entities that are interested in acting as a partner in offering service under innovative business models. Nontraditional providers may respond as part of a partnership with an ISP or may provide separate responses outlining their approaches. We encourage respondents to share their expertise, which may be used to shape the direction and form of this potential initiative. Respondents may work together to respond to this RFI.

III. RFI QUESTIONNAIRE

Please provide answers to the following questions below. The questions below are not all-inclusive, and we encourage respondents to provide other information they may believe is relevant to the purpose of this RFI. Furthermore, while it is not required, it is highly encouraged to take into consideration the Feasibility Study and Implementation Plan.

A. PROVIDING ENHANCED SERVICES TO BUSINESSES

One of the primary reasons for Eastgate to seek the installation of the regional middle mile backbone network is to allow businesses the ability to access high-quality services. These potential subscribers may not have the ability or the budget to own their fiber or manage the optical equipment required.

- How would you manage and distribute broadband services throughout SR-11 (and other areas)?
- What increments of broadband could be sold?
- What additional provider services will these businesses have access to? Disaster recovery, storage, replication, back-up, voice services, etc.?
- What managed or hosted services are available through your operations?
- What “last mile” advantages are available?

B. PROVIDING CARRIER ACCESS

- Can you manage the fiber throughout the entire Eastgate network that would eliminate or postpone Eastgate’s need to build a POP to allow carriers access to the network?
- How would other carriers access the SR-11 fiber through your network/facilities?
- How would “Last Mile” connectivity be configured?
- What significant networks do your network/facilities connect to or serve?
- Are there vertical markets or industries that could more easily be accessed by connecting through your network/facilities?
- Do you see a potential for the proposed backhaul network to connect to a long-haul network?
- Describe how your proposal would improve network redundancy and resiliency in the Eastgate Region and Northeast Ohio.
- Describe how your proposal would improve/expand potential connectivity to OARnet and various community anchor institutions (CAIs) in the Eastgate Region.

C. WORKING WITH EASTGATE

Eastgate intends to work to:

- Identify existing businesses’ telecommunications needs and propose solutions.
- Identify businesses that are considering moving to and determine the telecommunication needs and opportunities of the business.
- Explore opportunities to provide service to Community Anchor Institutions, such as school districts, libraries, emergency services, and the like.
- Identify a potential to collaborate with OARnet.

D. COSTS

Eastgate is open and willing to consider all possibilities to fund the Lake to River buildout. What do you expect your costs to build out middle-mile service throughout the Eastgate Region? Eastgate will seek the support of BroadbandOhio to build the proposed middle-mile network and

would prefer a partner that will work with Eastgate to obtain grant funding for this project.

Attached hereto and incorporated by reference is **Exhibit D**, a “Phase 1” construction cost estimate (Phase 1 is described in the Implementation Plan). Please opine on the construction cost estimates in **Exhibit D**.

IV. RFI PROCEDURE

A. RFI RESPONSE DEADLINE

Final RFI submissions must be in PDF format and be received by e-mail no later than **June 3, 2024, by 1:00 P.M. EST**. Responses should be sent electronically to:

Mark Ragozine

Eastgate Economic Development Program Manager

mragozine@eastgatecog.org

B. INQUIRIES

Following the RFI Issue Date, respondents may make inquiries regarding this RFI at any time before the RFI Response Deadline to Mark Ragozine, Eastgate Economic Development Program Manager, at mragozine@eastgatecog.org or 234-254-1517.

C. RESPONSE FORMAT

Please submit a PDF document that contains the information requested in Section III (“RFI Questionnaire”) above. This is an RFI, and as such, the response may include any additional information or comment that you consider relevant, and it is not necessary to answer every single question proposed above.

D. DISCLAIMER

THIS IS A REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (“RFI”) ONLY. This RFI is issued solely for information and planning purposes – it does not constitute a Request for Proposals (“RFP”) or a promise to issue an RFP in the future. Eastgate may intend to award a contract based on this RFI. Failure to respond to this RFI does not preclude participation in any future RFP, if any is issued.

Although “proposal,” “response,” “respondent, and “offeror” are used in this RFI, your response will be treated as information only and does not constitute a formal proposal. Furthermore, the Government is not at this time seeking quotations and will not accept unsolicited offers. Interested vendors are advised that Eastgate will not pay for any information or administrative costs incurred in response to this RFI. All costs associated with responding to this RFI will be solely at the interested party’s expense.

Eastgate will review responses based on the respondents' experience, how well the responses address Eastgate's objectives, how the proposed business model balances and shares risks and rewards, and other factors. Eastgate may provide more detailed information on available assets to one or more respondents and asks those respondents to refine their responses. Following the evaluation of responses, Eastgate may issue a request for more detail relating to an Eastgate-initiated project, cancel or delay plans to build out the SR-11 network or choose another direction that is deemed in Eastgate's best interest. Responding to the RFI is not a guarantee of a contract award. Further, there is no guarantee an RFP will be developed as a result of this RFI. Eastgate reserves the right to withdraw the RFI or any subsequent RFP, or to decline to award a contract.

Exhibit A
Feasibility Study

[Eastgate Regional Broadband Feasibility Study](#)

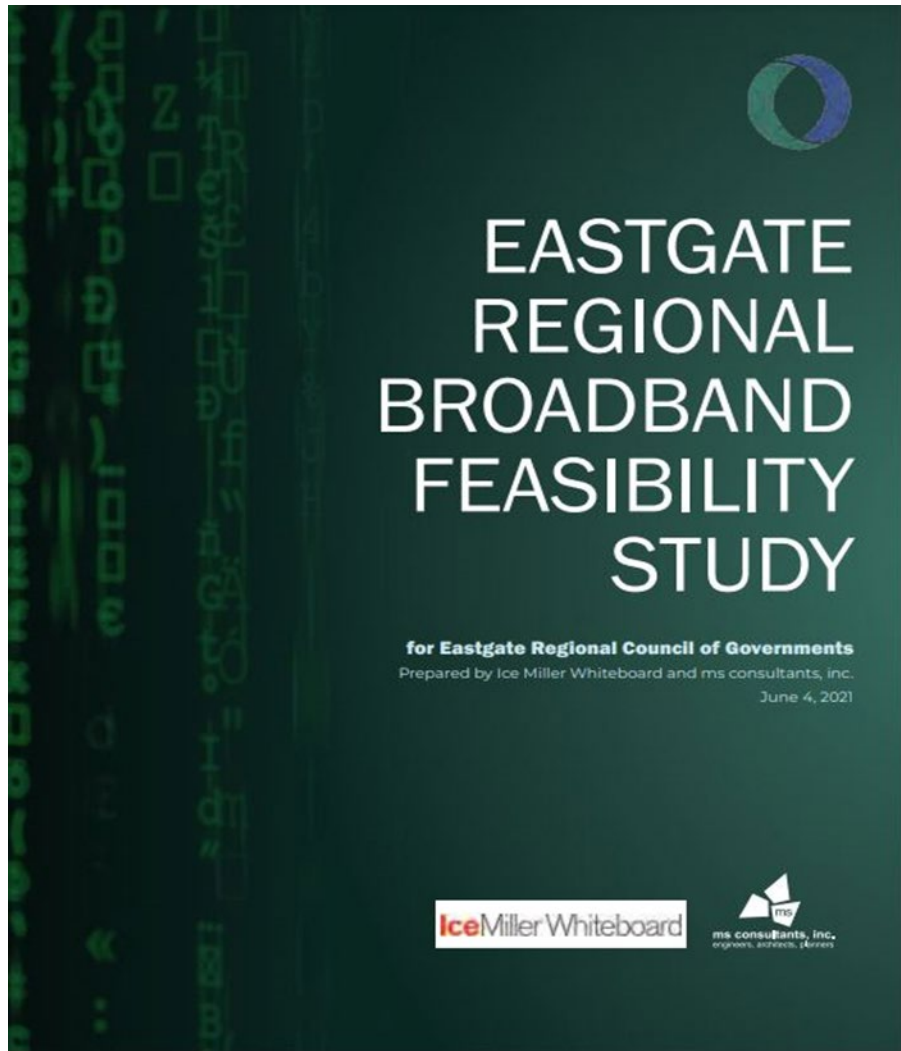


Exhibit B
Implementation Plan

[Eastgate Lake to River Broadband Implementation Plan](#)

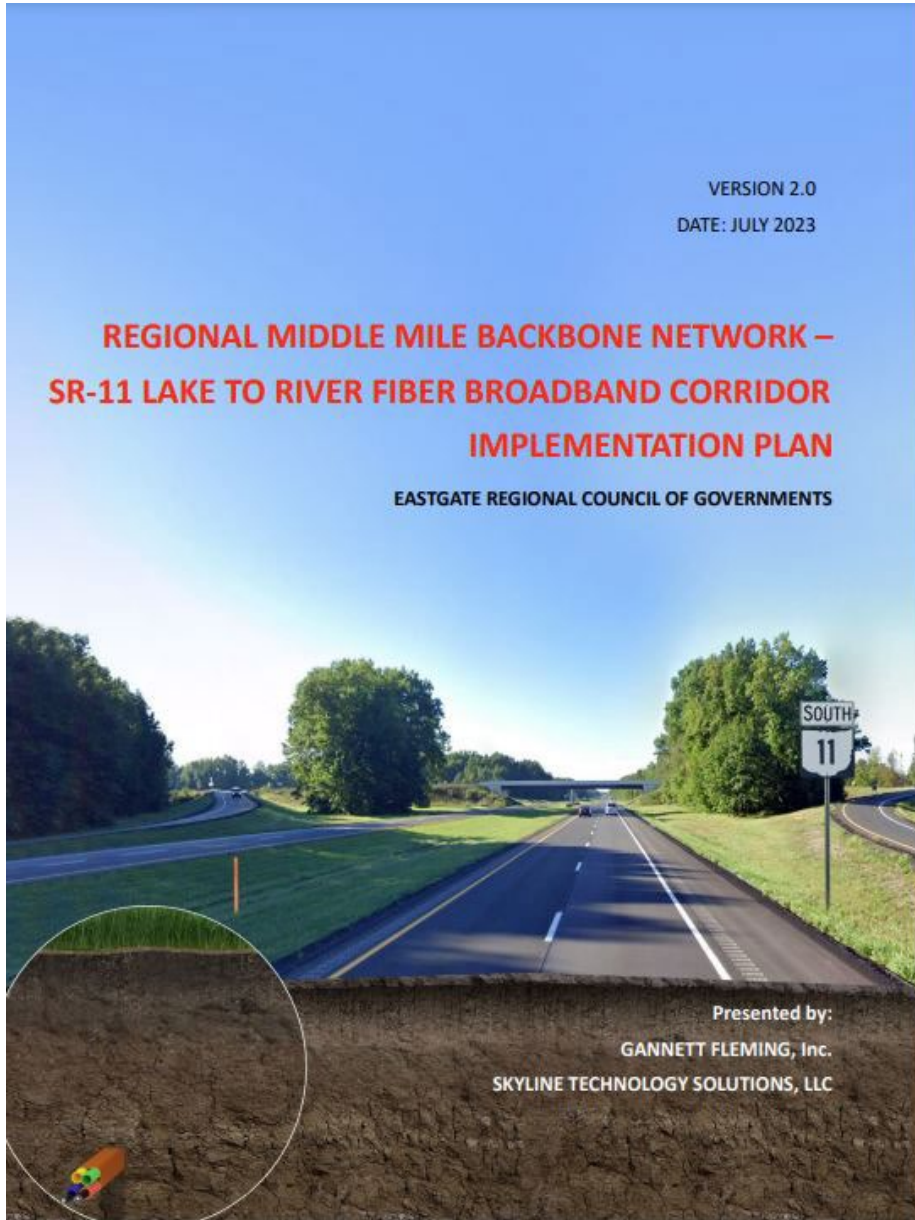


Exhibit C
Project Area

The Project Area consists of Ashtabula, Trumbull, Mahoning, and Columbiana Counties. The approximate location of the proposed middle-mile fiber along ST-11 is depicted relative to the region below.

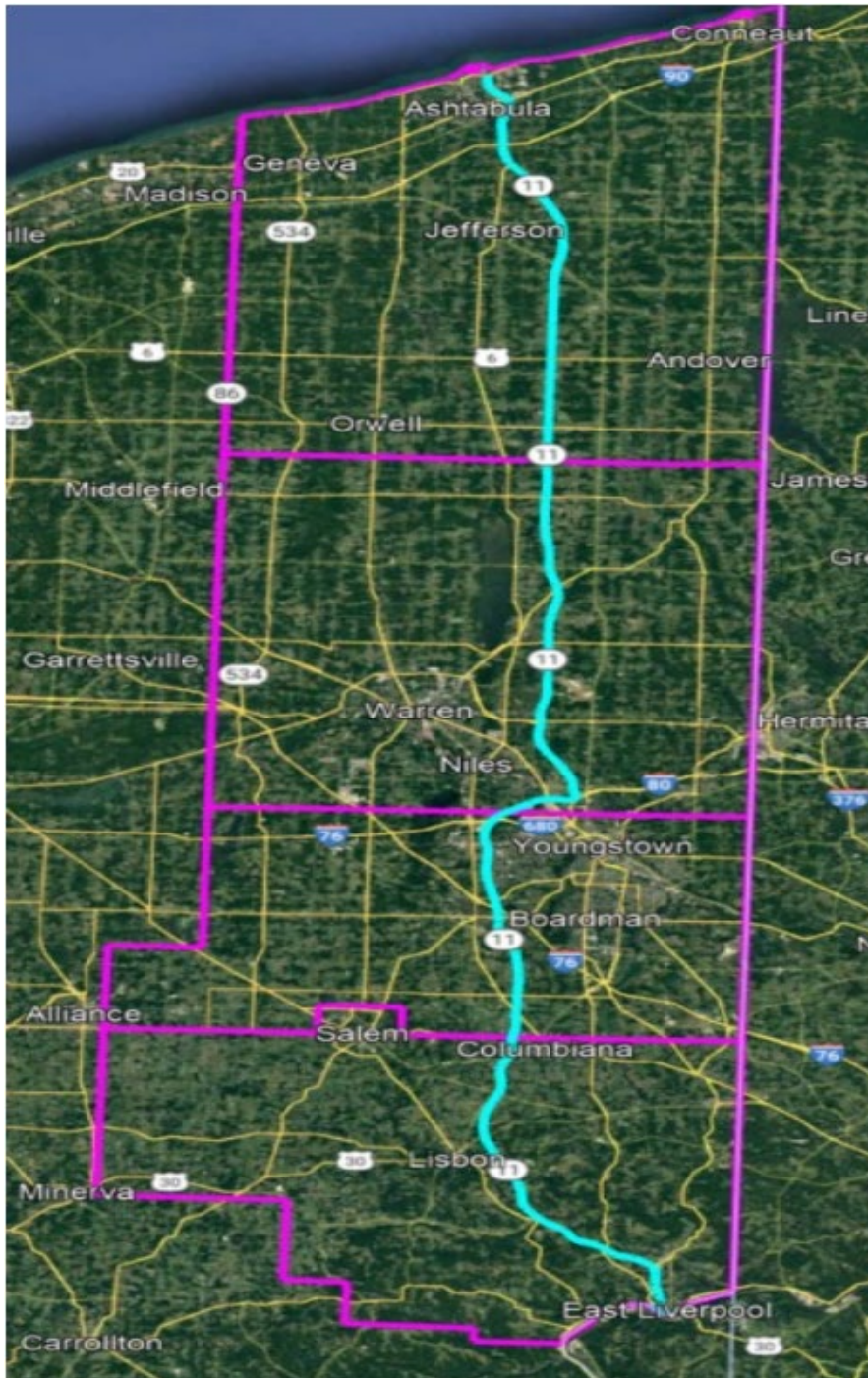


Exhibit D
Phase 1 Construction Cost Estimate

EASTGATE FIBER 30% PHASE 1 CONSTRUCTION COST ESTIMATE				
CONSTRUCTION ITEMS				
Item #	Description	Quantity	Unit Price	Total
1	TRENCH AND BACKFILL	218569	\$ 10.50	\$ 2,294,974.50
2	DIRECTIONAL BORING	21280	\$ 68.00	\$ 1,447,040.00
3	CONDUIT, 4 INCH, RIGID GALVANIZED STAINLESS, ATTACH TO STRUCTURE	1704	\$ 95.75	\$ 163,158.00
4	PULL BOX, 32 INCH	198	\$ 2,825.00	\$ 559,350.00
5	PULL BOX, 48 INCH	27	\$ 4,030.00	\$ 108,810.00
6	MICRODUCT, BUNDLED, 4-WAY, 27/20MM	239849	\$ 7.05	\$ 1,690,935.45
7	FIBER OPTIC CABLE, 432-CT	263833.9	\$ 7.45	\$ 1,965,562.56
8	FIBER OPTIC SPLICE ENCLOSURE	27	\$ 4,075.00	\$ 110,025.00
9	FLEXIBLE DELINEATOR POSTS	225	\$ 75.00	\$ 16,875.00
SUBTOTAL				\$ 8,356,730.51

CONTINGENCY ITEMS				
Item #	Description	Quantity	Unit Price	Total
C1	MOBILIZATION	1	\$ 417,836.53	\$ 417,836.53
C2	MAINTENANCE OF TRAFFIC	1	\$ 626,754.79	\$ 626,754.79
C3	FIBER TESTING AND INTEGRATION	1	\$ 250,701.92	\$ 250,701.92
C4	DEMARCATON SITES	1	\$ 417,836.53	\$ 417,836.53
C5	OTHER CONTINGENCY	1	\$ 835,673.05	\$ 835,673.05
C6	DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT CONTINGENCY	1	\$ 835,673.05	\$ 835,673.05
SUBTOTAL				\$ 3,384,475.85

TOTALS	\$ 11,741,206.36
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ASSUMPTIONS:
TRENCH IS ASSUMED TO CONSIST OF APPROXIMATELY 85% PLOWING, 10% EXCAVATION, 5% HAND DIGGING
MOBILIZATION 5% OF SUBTOTAL
MAINTENANCE OF TRAFFIC 7.5% OF SUBTOTAL
FIBER TESTING AND INTEGRATION 3% OF SUBTOTAL
DEMARCATON SITE COSTS 5% OF SUBTOTAL
DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT COSTS 10% OF SUBTOTAL
OTHER CONTINGENCY 10% OF SUBTOTAL
COST ESTIMATE INCLUDES COSTS FOR DESIGN AND PHYSICAL CONSTRUCTION ONLY. COST ESTIMATE DOES NOT INCLUDE COSTS AND REVENUES FOR OPERATIONS, MAINTENANCE AND COMMERCIALIZATION ACTIVITIES.
APPROXIMATE LIMITS OF PHASE 1 IS ALONG SR-11 FROM SR-82 INTERCHANGE TO US-20 INTERCHANGE