



REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

Trumbull County Broadband Preliminary Engineering Study

The Western Reserve Port Authority is seeking proposals from qualified firms to conduct a study to analyze the proposed completion of a fiber optic loop that will provide high-speed broadband service.

Proposals are due no later than 2:00 p.m. eastern time on March 30, 2023.

GENERAL CONDITIONS

1. Introduction

The Western Reserve Port Authority (“Port”) is seeking proposals from qualified firms to conduct a study to analyze the proposed completion of a fiber optic loop that will provide high-speed broadband service to regional businesses and historically underserved communities to aid in the region's ongoing equitable economic recovery. The Trumbull County Broadband Preliminary Engineering Study (“Study”) will help implement the recommendations of Eastgate's Regional Broadband Feasibility Study and ensure digital equity in the coal-impacted communities of Eastern Ohio Appalachia's Mahoning Valley. The study area encompasses multiple Opportunity Zones.

The study will examine alternative broadband deployment routes including an analysis of existing providers who may already have ownership interests in proposed routes and an assessment of pole attachment costs. The study will also identify partnerships to deploy broadband services in the coal-impacted region and recommend innovative funding opportunities to leverage public-private investment in the project's implementation.

The study will focus on implementing the recommendations of the recently completed (June 2021) EDA-funded Eastgate Regional Broadband Feasibility Study and provide fiber service in some of the most unserved areas of the region. It will serve as the next step in developing detailed recommendations and fundable projects to deploy middle network and last-mile broadband in underserved portions of the Trumbull County.

2. Background

The project area includes four Trumbull County communities in Eastern Ohio Appalachia: City of Warren, City of Niles, Howland Township, and Weathersfield Township. The region is home to the Youngstown Warren Boardman, OH PA Metropolitan Statistical Area.

While the project will be regional in scope, the primary focus will be on existing underserved businesses, institutions, and households, as well as future development areas most ripe for catalytic commercial/industrial investment such as industrial parks, commercial corridors, and brownfield redevelopment sites. A connection to the future regional "Lake to River Corridor" fiber optic backbone being developed along the State Route 11 freeway right-of-way by Eastgate Regional Council of Governments will be explored. The project will also seek ways to best improve digital access to the mega site (over 1,000 acres) available for industrial development at the former BDM steel facility. This catalytic development site is one of the largest in the state with freight rail access and is being aggressively marketed by the Western Reserve Port Authority, the Youngstown/Warren Regional Chamber, and JobsOhio.

Special emphasis will be placed along the region's primary logistics corridors in the vicinity of national freight routes along the Ohio Turnpike (I-80/I-76) in the vicinity of Lordstown. This emerging center for energy tech incubation and vehicle electrification manufacturing has been branded as the "Voltage Valley". Special emphasis will be placed along the region's primary logistics corridors in the vicinity of national freight routes along the Ohio Turnpike (I-80/I-76) in the vicinity of Lordstown. This emerging Appalachian distribution hub is a subarea of the Voltage Valley known as the Logistics Innovation and Vehicle Electrification (LIVE) Zone and being studied currently as it relates to freight transportation infrastructure and smart mobility through a study recently funded by the Ohio Department of Transportation.

Population (2020 Census): 201,977

SCOPE OF SERVICES

3. Broadband Deployment Routes and Regional Implementation Strategy

The scope of work to be performed by the consultant is as follows:

Phase 1 Broadband Deployment Routes: The first phase will involve preparing a recommended network of high-speed broadband routes to best serve businesses, institutions, and residents in the project area.

- Task 1: Inventory of area public and private utility provider service areas and facility ownership
- Task 2: Assessment of existing underserved businesses, institutions, and residents and future broadband needs at catalytic development sites
- Task 3: Recommended network of broadband routes and associated project development costs

Phase 1 Deliverable: Broadband Deployment Routes report completed

Phase 2 - Implementation Strategy: The second phase will identify best practices for deployment and recommend a feasible course of action for implementing a collaborative public-private partnership to advance the initiative.

- Task 4: Summary of applicable regional, state, and national best practices in regional broadband models including potential P3 regulatory structures. Task will include a comparison matrix that includes advantages, challenges, and risks associated with each model.
- Task 5: Identify project champion(s) and recommend deployment model based on local needs/constraints and organizational capacity within the region. An implementation

strategy will accompany the recommendation and detail project timing, responsible parties, funding sources/innovative financing opportunities, project development costs, ownership responsibility, and operations and maintenance costs.

- Task 6: Funding strategy to implement the recommendations drawing upon new financial resources being offered at the state level through BroadbandOhio and the federal level through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

Phase 2 Deliverable: Regional Implementation Strategy

4. Project Activities and Timeline

Western Reserve Port Authority and their partners are ready to begin the project as soon a consultant is contracted with a goal of completing the study within a six-month timeline.

Months 1-3 (Phase 1) Broadband Deployment Routes: The first phase will involve preparing a GIS inventory of broadband facilities/providers and underserved locations within the project area. This phase will then culminate in the development of recommended deployment routes and associated project costs.

- Month 1 (Task 1): Inventory of area broadband service provider facilities and coverage areas
- Month 2 (Task 2): Assessment of currently underserved locations and future broadband needs
- Month 3 (Task 3): Assessment of existing/future carrying capacity needs

Milestone: Broadband Deployment Routes completed

Months 4-6 (Phase 2) Regional Implementation Strategy: The second phase will identify best practices for regional broadband deployment and recommend a feasible course of action for implementing a collaborative public-private partnership to advance the initiative.

- Month 4 (Task 4): Summary of applicable best practices in regional broadband deployment including potential P3 regulatory structures
- Month 5 (Task 5): Identify project champion and recommend deployment model based on local needs/constraints and organizational capacity within the region
- Month 6 (Task 6): Funding strategy to capitalize on latest financial resources available at state and federal levels including modular project summaries that can be easily integrated into competitive funding applications

Milestone (Phase 2): Regional Implementation Strategy completed

5. Budget Distribution

The budget for this study is not to exceed \$79,970. A breakdown is required in submittal and should be shown as follows:

Task	Timeline	Cost
(1) Inventory of facilities and coverage areas	X months	\$
(2) Assessment of current locations and future needs		\$
(3) Assessment capacity/Network deployment routes		\$
(4) Summary of best practices		\$
(5) Recommend deployment model/preferred alternative		\$
(6) Funding strategy		\$
	Total	\$ (Not to Exceed \$79,970)

6. Project Approach

The general scope should be followed; however, the consultant is encouraged to insert innovative strategies to best implement the project. It should detail the consultant's ability to complete the work within the timeframe allotted, their methodology to obtain maximum measurable (deployment routes and implementation strategy), and intangible factors that are not described.

7. Financing

The project scope should include a detailed implementation and funding strategy that will serve as a playbook for funding and implementing catalytic enhancements to the regional broadband infrastructure network. The study will advance project development and demonstrate readiness in the eyes of state and federal funding agencies and private service provider partners.

QUALIFICATIONS

8. Proposal Evaluation Criteria

Experience of staff, success in broadband development and successful history of developing similar plans should be emphasized in the submittal and will be weighed as the submittals are evaluated and scored.

A selection committee will rank each item of the Proposal based on the maximum points available listed below.

- Consultant's experience with projects of similar size, schedule, and complexity. (25 points)
- Qualifications of Proposer and project team personnel. (10 points)
- Project Approach/completeness of responses to the Scope of Services. (25 points)
- Consultant's familiarity with the study area, WRPA local partners, and state and federal inventive programs. (10 points)

GENERAL INFORMATION

9. Proposal Submittal Requirements

Submittal should include:

- Letter of intent (1 page)
 - Must include Project Manager and contact information.
- Experience Statement (10 pages max)
 - Should include experience with reference to tasks listed in the Scope of Services.
 - Firms experience in the development of similar plans.
 - Broadband experience.
- Project Approach (3 pages max)
 - Any supplemental tasks not previously identified
 - Details of timelines and deliverables
 - Any innovative approach that distinguishes your firm
- Budget Distribution (1 page)

Instruction for Submitting a Proposal:

- Provide six (6) copies of the proposal in a sealed envelope.
- Submittal should be on 8 ½" x 11" paper, 12-point font size, with 1" margins.
- Bind proposals by stapling only. Do not use any other binding system.
- All submittals are to be clearly marked "Trumbull County Broadband Preliminary Engineering Study RFP".

The proposal may be mailed or delivered to:

Krista Beniston
Western Reserve Port Authority
100 E. Federal Street, Suite 422
Youngstown, OH 44503

The proposal submission deadline is 2:00 p.m. eastern time on March 30, 2023.

10. Questions and Replies

To ensure that all prospective respondents accurately and completely understand the RFP requirements, the Port will accept written questions via e-mail to Krista Beniston, kbeniston@westernreserveport.com, by the date and time listed below. Replies to all questions will be sent via blind copy to all parties who have expressed interest.

Questions must be submitted by March 23, 2023.

11. Disclaimers

The Port reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals in whole or in part, to waive any irregularities in any proposal, to accept the proposal(s) which, in the judgment of the Port is/are most advantageous to the Port and to re-advertise if desired. The Port reserves the right to negotiate with any provider(s).

12. Equal Opportunity

The Port is an Equal Opportunity Employer and prohibits, in accordance with the law, discrimination on the basis of race, sex, sexual identity or expression, gender origin or identity, national origin, religion, disability or age.