

# IÑUPIAT COMMUNITY of the ARCTIC SLOPE

an IRA Regional Tribal Government

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April 30, 2010

The Honorable Gary Locke  
Secretary of Commerce  
United States Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Ave, NW  
Washington, DC 20230

RE: Broadband Technology Opportunities Program, Broadband for the American Arctic Proposal,  
EasyGrants ID # 4581

Dear Secretary Locke:

I am writing in response to NTIA's request for comments from Native American tribes regarding pending applications for Recovery Act funding under the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP). The Iñupiat Community of the Arctic Slope is a federally recognized tribe serving the Barrow area (census block groups 021850001001 and 021850001002) and other parts of the Arctic Slope.

We support the Arctic Cable Company's Broadband for the American Arctic (BFAA) project, for the following reasons:

- BFAA will replace slow, unreliable satellite links with fiber optic cable, immediately and dramatically improving all communications. This will ensure that service in our community meets the goals of the FCC's new National Broadband Plan.
- Our community needs the improvements in distance education that BFAA will bring. BFAA will directly serve Ilisagvik College, a tribal college. With this connection, our indigenous people can take advantage of resources world-wide while remaining in their community.
- Public safety relies on communications. In our remote area, the ability to communicate quickly and reliably is a matter of life and death.
- Fiber optic connectivity will finally offer the high-speed broadband capabilities required to deliver critical telemedicine and economic development to our rural communities currently served only by inadequate satellite services.
- We understand that BFAA has received all state and federal permits and approvals. We have been consulted on environmental issues and approve of the project approach.
- The project is designed to support the collection of real-time oceanic, fisheries, and climate research and data acquisition. As a community on the front lines of climate change effects, we look forward to a dramatic improvement in these research capabilities.

Thank you for your consideration of our views on this matter of critical importance to our community. Please feel free to contact me if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

  
Price D. Leavitt, Sr.  
Executive Director

cc: Lawrence Strickling, NTIA  
Ian Martinez, NTIA

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May 14, 2010

Mr. Lawrence E. Strickling  
Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information  
National Telecommunications and Information Administration  
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Strickling:

In light of the great significance of broadband for rural Alaskans, we ask that you accept this late-filed, supplemental response to your letter of April 16, 2010, soliciting comments on applications for Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) grants. Although we submitted an initial response on April 30, we would like to modify that submission by expressing our strong support for a project that we had not reviewed at the time. Specifically, we would like to *highly recommend* the application submitted by Eskimos, Inc. to construct the **Arctic National Broadband Network (ANBN), Easygrant ID 7252**, submitted as a Comprehensive Community Infrastructure project.

As noted in our prior letter, all existing broadband services for the North Slope communities are provided by satellite. Satellite systems, by their very nature, are bandwidth-constrained, expensive to construct, and difficult to modify or expand. The ANBN proposal, by contrast, proposes the construction of a microwave system. Although we have previously expressed support for a proposed fiber optic system to serve the Barrow area, we have subsequently become concerned about the sustainability of fiber optic networks in the extreme ice environment across which the network will be constructed, as well as its impact on the sensitive tundra environment. ANBN's extensive research suggests that a microwave system would have superior survivability in the harsh environment at issue, and would be more compatible with environmental concerns.

Further, ANBN's proposal promises to encourage on the ground investment in facilities in our area as well as local jobs. The proposed network is carefully designed to expand capacity easily and inexpensively as demand for broadband service becomes higher. Indeed, plans already exist to continue the network further down the Alaskan coast to serve six additional communities. The location of the proposed microwave network would also permit the network to serve the needs of government and private groups engaged in climate research, or in the event of further mineral development. Both of these efforts may ultimately help stimulate economic growth in rural Alaska.

Indeed, as ANBN has itself stressed, we think the proposal stands out among other Alaska-focused BTOP proposals given a focus on and input by local concerns. The proposal was

Mr. Lawrence E. Strickling

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developed with tribal input and input from the Arctic National Broadband Coalition, and is designed to support important local anchor institutions in our area, including the only tribal community college in Alaska.

In short, the Iñupiat Community of the Arctic Slope are of the view that the proposed ANBN microwave system would best serve the economic and geographic concerns of our tribal members and our North Slope communities. We therefore, strongly urge you to grant the BTOP proposal submitted by Eskimos, Inc.

Thank you for your consideration of our views on this important matter that will affect our communities for decades to come. Please feel free to contact us if you have further questions.

Respectfully submitted,



George Edwardson, President