

JEFFERSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR AGENDA REQUEST

TO: Board of County Commissioners
FROM: Mark McCauley, County Administrator
DATE: January 27, 2025
RE: Letter of support: Jefferson County Public Utility District (PUD) No. 1 BEAD Grant Application

STATEMENT OF ISSUE:

The PUD is applying for \$13.5 million in BEAD grant funding to complete their buildout of Jefferson County's rural broadband access program. The PUD has already secured \$55 million in state and federal grants in support of this program. The BEAD funding now being requested will enable the PUD to complete the project by providing broadband access to the 1,200 remaining homes and businesses not yet connected.

ANALYSIS:

Jefferson County has been a strong supporter of the PUD's broadband access program as evidenced by the \$900,000 in American Rescue Plan Act Funds that the county contributed to the program.

FISCAL IMPACT:

None.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Board of County Commissioners approve the letter of support and authorize the Board Chair to sign on behalf of the Board.

REVIEWED BY:


Mark McCauley, County Administrator

1/22/25
Date



Board of County Commissioner
1820 Jefferson Street
PO Box 1221
Port Townsend, WA 9836

Heather Dudley-Nollette, District 1 Heidi Eisenhour, District 2 Greg Brotherton, District 3

January 27, 2025

Kevin Streett
General Manager, Jefferson County PUD
Re: BEAD Application Support

Dear Mr. Streett,

On behalf of Jefferson County, we are writing to support Public Utility District No. 1 of Jefferson County (JPUD)'s application for BEAD funding to build access to the remaining 1,200 homes and businesses unserved and underserved by access to broadband internet in Eastern Jefferson County. Jefferson County has been a strong supporter of your broadband access program as evidenced by the \$900,000 in American Rescue Plan Act funds the County contributed to JPUD for that program.

JPUD has been a leader in obtaining funding to build fiber internet to rural areas. To date JPUD has secured \$55M in state and federal grants to provide access to more than 5000 homes; and has constructed nearly 200 miles of fiber to more than 1000 homes in Quilcene, Chimacum, Discovery Bay and Gardiner.

Residents in unserved and underserved areas often pay higher prices for internet access than customers in served developed areas. Some are forced to cobble connectivity together from multiple compromised and expensive technologies like satellite and cellular. That's if they can get internet access at all. Some are connected to deprecated copper facilities that have exceeded bandwidth capacities and with no plan for upgrades or expansion by the local provider. All are hindered from taking part in today's civic, economic, and scholastic environments.

Because of JPUD's extraordinary effort and success, the majority of its rural electric service territory customers will be served before BEAD funds are released. They will be able to fully participate in remote learning, work, telemedicine, and connect to family far and wide. And the technology they use to connect, 10/10 Gbps fiber to the home or business, has far more capacity and reliability than that which connects most of urban America.

We strongly support JPUD's efforts to expand access to broadband internet in Eastern Jefferson County. We urge you to approve their application for BEAD funding.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sincerely,

Heather Dudley-Nollette, Dist. 1

Heidi Eisenhour, Dist. 2 - Chair

Greg Brotherton, Dist. 3