

# Project: Broadband Acceleration Grant Yr 2 - Public Comment

Submitted by Megan Bottenberg on 03/08/2022

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**Which of the following best describes you? (Check all that apply)**

- Internet provider in proposed service area

**I am providing comments related to the following application (choose one):**

SKT Inc. - [95th & Meridian] Rural Haysville

**I am submitting comments to express**

Concerns regarding a project

**I am sharing concerns the project:**

- Proposes to serve an area likely to be served without grant funds because plans are in place to serve this area, although construction has not yet begun

**Please provide your comments in the text box below.**

Dear Kansas Office of Broadband Development (“KODB”),  
Cox Communications Kansas, LLC (“Cox”) provides these comments concerning certain applications submitted in response to the above-referenced solicitation. Cox thanks the KODB for the opportunity to review the applications and provide this feedback as part of the grant application review process.

Recognizing the important social and economic drivers of a robust, reliable broadband network, in 2020 the Kansas Legislature in a bi-partisan act, and with the support of Governor Laura Kelly, established broadband funding with the goal of extending broadband to unserved and underserved households and anchor institutions in Kansas.

As reflected on the KOBOD's website, the fund is intended to bring broadband to areas that are unlikely to receive broadband service without state or federal funding support. Cox submits these comments today to inform the KOBOD of underserved areas where it is planning to extend its existing network to provide broadband service completely with its own private investment and without the need for state or federal funds.

Upon review of the applications Cox determined that some of the providers are seeking funding from the Kansas Broadband Acceleration Grant to offer broadband in three communities where Cox has plans to build a fiber-to-the-home network by expanding its nearby infrastructure. Specifically, we found overlap in: IdeaTek's applications for Medora in Reno County and Schulte in Sedgwick County; and SKT for Haysville also in Sedgwick County. As discussed in detail below, Cox has plans to extend its network into these same three communities, but through use of its own private funding. Given this, it would be wasteful of Kansas taxpayers' dollars for KOBOD to allocate the finite dollars of the Kansas Broadband Acceleration Grant to these same areas. For this reason, Cox recommends the KOBOD deny requests for funding these areas.

Cox has plans to complete construction of its network expansion to the communities of Medora, Schulte and Haysville within the next 12 months. By doing this, Cox not only will deliver via a fiber-optic network residential internet speeds of up to 1 Gigabit symmetrical, we also will make available our full suite of residential, business and enterprise voice, video, transport, security and automation services. This is a long-term commitment to these communities as our investment will take nearly a decade to pay for itself.

To ensure that all consumers in these new areas can utilize Cox services regardless of income, Cox will be offering the low-cost Connect2Compete and ConnectAssist digital equity programs available throughout its Kansas and nationwide footprint (Affordable Internet Options from Cox | Low-Cost Internet). These programs are available to qualifying households and provide access to necessary equipment and digital training and protections along with the low-priced internet connection. Cox also is a participant in the Federal Communications Commission's Affordable Connectivity Program, which enables qualified households to lower their broadband bills by \$30 per month and \$75 per month in Tribal Lands, allowing many customers under Cox's digital equity programs to receive free service.

Recently, Cox announced a multi-billion dollar network investments for its existing footprint and to expand into new service areas (Cox Network Transformation to Power Next Generation of Internet Users - Feb 17, 2022). The planned expansion into Medora, Schulte and Haysville is part of Cox's ongoing efforts to address the digital divide in underserved rural communities by building to more than 100,000 new homes within the next three (3) years.

Cox already is part of Kansas, serving ninety-two (92) communities across the state. Hundreds of Cox employees and their families live and work in Kansas neighborhoods where Cox maintains ongoing partnerships with important community pillars such the Boys and Girls Club, more than sixty (60) non-profits and sixty-five (65) school districts. As we plan our expansion into Schulte, Haysville, and Medora, we plan to establish similar relationships and investments in these communities.

Cox maintains a statewide franchise from the Kansas Corporation Commission and is preparing an amendment to include these three (3) new communities, expected to become effective within 30 days. It also already holds a license to offer telephone service from the Kansas Corporation Commission. Further, Cox has pole attachment agreements with AT&T, Centurylink and Evergy. With these requisite licenses and agreements already in place, Cox will be able to commence construction shortly and anticipates completion within twelve (12) months.

In support of our comments, Cox submits the following documents along with the online articles provided

above:

- Copy of Kansas Statewide Video Franchise Authority
- Copy of Kansas Corporation Commission Telephone License
- Copy of AT&T Pole Attachment Agreement (Centurylink and Evergy agreements providing upon request)
- Map showing existing Cox footprint and planned expansion into Schulte, Haysville and Medora
- Abridged expansion plan, including estimated costs, long-term return of investment projections, and amount of underserved residential households for Schulte, Haysville and Medora (given the sensitive nature of this information, Cox is requesting confidential treatment of this attachment)

Cox thanks the KODB for this opportunity to comment of the Kansas Broadband Acceleration Grant applications. We would be happy to further discuss, should you have any questions.

**Please provide supporting documentation to support your comments. Concerns related to overbuilds should include explicit data such as Census block and address specific data. Submit multiple files as a single ZIP file.**



**By submitting the Public Comment Form (the "Form") and any supporting evidence, you attest that all information furnished is true and accurate to the best of your knowledge and that any attachments are free of malware or viruses. You also acknowledge that falsifying any information could result in legal action against you and will bar you from submitting public comments to this web site in the future. You authorize the Kansas Office of Broadband Development, Kansas Department of Commerce (KOBBD) to contact you if further information is needed. You expressly acknowledge and consent to some personal information, including your name, address, phone, e-mail, organization you represent, and comments, being posted for public view on the Kansas Department of Commerce web site at [www.kansascommerce.gov](http://www.kansascommerce.gov). The KOBBD will use its best efforts to redact any personal identifiable information outside of the above that is not considered in the public domain. By typing your name and date and by submitting the Form, you acknowledge, authorize, and consent to this Public Comment Privacy & Acknowledgments.**

Megan Bottenberg 3-8-22