



**Latah County**  
**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

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***Kathie LaFortune ♦ Thomas C. Lamar ♦ John Bohman***

Idaho Broadband Advisory Board  
c/o Ramón S. Hobdey-Sánchez, J.D.  
State Broadband Program Manager  
Idaho Department of Commerce  
700 W. State Street, Boise, Idaho 83702

Tuesday, February 7, 2023

Re: Creating Idaho's North-South Middle Mile Network  
Letter of Support

Dear Idaho Broadband Advisory Board:

The Latah County Broadband Coalition strongly affirms support for the two projects that the Board recently awarded with Idaho Broadband Funds for critical middle-mile routes to serve the state and our region:

- A \$20 million award for the public-private partnership between the Idaho Regional Optical Network (IRON) and Intermountain Infrastructure Group (IIG) to build a fiber route from Star to Grangeville.
- A \$6.3 million award to the Port of Lewiston to enable the second leg of a fiber route from Grangeville to Lewiston and Lewiston to Moscow.

These projects fill a huge gap in broadband infrastructure in the state by creating reliable, fast, resilient, and affordable fiber connections – especially in north central Idaho, our most underserved region. Building these middle-mile routes is not only a necessity for public health and safety — ensuring that rural Idahoans can rely on the same level of responsiveness to emergencies and access to healthcare that others do – but also provides the much-needed openly available connections that level the playing field for internet service providers, promoting competition, lowering prices, and allowing commerce and education to move at 21<sup>st</sup>-century speeds. Successful broadband implementation means separating infrastructure from service, where publicly funded assets are future-proof and made available to everyone at competitive wholesale rates. Finally, these critical projects are bolstered by the additional benefit that Idaho-owned assets keep Idaho's dollars in Idaho.

For these reasons, the Latah County Broadband Coalition heartily supports and commends the Board's decision to fund these proposals to build two long-awaited pieces of the state's digital highways. We would also encourage you to consider funding the DIGB2 proposal to close the fiber loop in our region – connecting Grangeville to Nez Perce to Orofino, which represents the final piece of the puzzle for regional redundancy and would all but guarantee that emergency responders and the communities they serve never experience a communications blackout.

These three routes build the foundation for the future-proof last-mile solutions that you'll see proposed from local communities like ours in upcoming rounds of funding. Indeed, they are prerequisite. Delivering the connectedness that our rural residents, businesses, and students deserve requires that these historic investments are carefully considered and built to last – *thank you* for your diligent and deliberate choices.

Sincerely,

Tom Lamar, Chair  
Latah County Board of Commissioners

On behalf of the [Latah County Broadband Coalition](#): City of Potlatch, City of Bovill, City of Genesee, City of Kendrick, City of Juliaetta, City of Deary, City of Troy, City of Moscow, Latah County Library District, Moscow School District, Kendrick Joint School District, Genesee Joint School District, Potlatch School District, Troy School District, University of Idaho, Gritman Medical Center, Latah County