



Cumberland County Commissioners Middle Mile Project Responses

1. When the Commissioners commissioned a feasibility study, how much weight does that study carry in deciding to move forward or not move forward with the project? How do you, as Commissioners, make that decision?

The then Cumberland Commissioners on July 27, 2021, adopted resolution 2021-489 authorizing an “PROFESSIONAL SERVICES CONTRACT FOR CONDUCTING A BROADBAND FEASIBILITY STUDY AND DEVELOPING A COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY TELECOMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY” with V-COMM, LLC.

On July 26, 2022, the then Commissioners modified that document by Resolution 2022-481 entitled “resolution approving change order number one to contract for conducting a broadband feasibility study and developing a comprehensive economic and community telecommunications strategy, change is scope of work only and no increase/decrease of money.

This resolution stopped the work on the feasibility study by V-COMM and changed their job to working with the Cumberland County Improvement Authority to create the application for the NTIA GRANT.

The feasibility study was not completed. There is no feasibility study completed as to this project and therefore no weight can be placed on the same. This commission cannot state the reasons why the administrations of 2021 and 2022 did this.



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2. Why was the feasibility study abandoned?

This commission cannot state the reasons why the administrations of 2021 and 2022 did this.

3. Why wasn't the feasibility study from Vineland and County not included in the grant application?

Vineland has done a feasibility study as to providing broadband service to Vineland residents which has not been released due to stated public safety concerns. This Commission did not file the NITA GRANT application and therefore cannot state why the same was not included, but the same was not publicly released and therefore could not be used as a part of the County's NTIA application.

It should also be noted that as noted above, prior commissions abandoned the County's feasibility study as to Broadband.

4. When was the feasibility study commissioned? When was it abandoned?

As noted above, commissioned July 27, 2021, abandoned July 26, 2022.

5. Why was the feasibility study not reinvigorated?

Once received the deadlines as to the granted NTIA GRANT of August 31, 2023, did not allow enough time to conduct a feasibility study now.



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- 6. Why do Commissioner boards believe it is their job to administer a public utility? Why do they believe they can do that job?**

At this time this Commission does not plan on administering a public utility – if the Grant proves feasible the plan is to construct the dark wire, unlit broadband line and then lease strands of said line to companies that would then light said wire and use the same in their business endeavors. Based on the answer to the first part of this question, the second part of the same is not pertinent.

- 7. Where do railroad crossings fit in to the middle mile and how will it work?**

Special permits must be obtained to have the broadband wire proposed by this project cross or go under railroad lines. Those companies that successfully bid and are constructing any part of the broadband project crossing a railroad track must seek and successfully obtain those permits and place the wire to cross said tracks by the terms of the granted permit. The cost of the same will be included in their bid and will be their responsibility to obtain.

- 8. Who and what will benefit from the Middle Mile in Cumberland County? Most residents have internet capabilities. What is Vineland's benefit in all of this?**

It is believed that the Middle Mile Project will provide better, more efficient, faster internet service in Cumberland and Salem Counties, will foster competition therefore reducing the cost of such service, and may attract business to the Counties due to the availability of high quality, fast internet capabilities. It is believed that this project will provide less expensive middle mile and first mile connection possibility to Vineland in a manner that will allow their potential ISP status to be more economically feasible.



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- 9. How will Cumberland County Board of Commissioners guard against wasteful spending with the Middle Mile project?**

It is the intention of the Board of Commissioners of both counties involved in the project to create an experienced management team that will closely monitor the project and expenditures thereof.

- 10. Will the connection cost of the ISP providers be the same and how will that be determined?**

It is the intention of the Board of Commissioners of both counties involved in the project to retain experts in the field that will advise as to the fair and proper charge to be made to any ISP provider that seeks to use the Middle Mile Broadband Structure constructed.

- 11. Will the intra-county connection ISP be charged?**

It is not anticipated that an intra-county ISP connection fee will be charged.

- 12. Will the County, Township/City taxes go up due to the Middle Mile project?**

The Broadband system proposed is designed to be self-sustaining; that revenues will equal expenses of the system and that no County, City or Township taxes will rise due to the same.



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13. Are there any other neighboring counties doing this? Does each county have a middle mile, end mile?

There are no neighboring Counties that have received a Middle Mile Grant – therefore no neighboring Counties are doing this type of a project. The Middle Mile project as proposed will cross parts of both Salem and Cumberland Counties. This project, as proposed does not include end mile, often called “last mile” connections.

14. If the Middle Mile proceeds, are we guaranteed to have funding for the end mile and the upkeep/maintenance?

No. But the project is projected, and it is hoped that revenues will equal or exceed upkeep/maintenance expenses. This project as currently proposed does not include “end mile” connections.

15. Is there a plan in place to maintain the infrastructure? How much will it cost to maintain it? Is it built into the budget?

The project includes projections that it will cost approximately 1.1 million dollars yearly to maintain the infrastructure of the project once completed. The project includes projections that revenue will be generated by companies or individuals purchasing use of the system in a manner to provide sufficient revenue to maintain the infrastructure.



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16. Do we have any guarantees from “companies” who said they would invest in our County if Middle Mile/end mile is completed?

There are no guarantees from any company that they will invest in either county if the Middle Mile is completed. There is one letter from T-Mobile that states a possible interest in the project. It is believed that the City of Vineland may also be a customer of the system. There are no written guarantees from any potential customer to make use of the system.

17. How will they run this? (Underground, above ground) What damage to the land will it cause?

The primary projection of the proposal is that the wires of this middle mile system will be suspended on existing telephone poles, pre-existing towers and across bodies of water under or on bridges that cross the same. Where feasible, the industry standard as to wire such as will be used in this system is that burying the same is superior to hanging the wires from telephone poles; therefore, to the extent possible both physically and financially, the wire of the Middle Mile System will be buried where possible. It is not projected in the plan that any damage to land or ecological impact will be caused by the Middle Mile project.

18. By expanding this infrastructure ISP, will it be helping Comcast, Verizon, etc., or will it be a completely different provider?

Certainly Comcast, Verizon and other ISP's are potential customers of the Middle Mile Project, although neither Comcast or Verizon have expressed interest in the same, Comcast specifically stating in writing they will not use the system.



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The project as proposed does not project either County becoming an ISP – the project proposes that ISP companies will lease the Middle Mile wire and provide revenue to the Counties.

19. How long will this Middle Mile project take to complete? How long after that will the end mile be complete?

The optimal projection is that the Middle Mile Project will be completed in 3-4 years, although the project will probably take approximately 5 years to complete. This Middle Mile Project does not include any proposed “end mile” connections – this is solely a “Middle Mile Project.”

20. How without a feasibility study do the Commissioners know this is a good idea? Why can't we see Vineland's?

If voted upon favorably those Commissioners who do so obviously believe that this project is a good idea. It is true that no County Feasibility Study was completed, and each individual Commissioner who votes in favor of the project would have to be asked their thoughts on why this is a good idea without a Feasibility study – the Author of these answers cannot do that. The Author similarly cannot answer for Vineland in regard to its study.

21. Where is the complete breakdown of the costs for construction, materials, etc.?

No complete breakdown, or itemization of the costs and/or materials of this project has been done. It is anticipated that the engineer charged with designing the project will provide the breakdown of cost projections as to the project once hired.



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Those who completed the application claim that no such breakdown of costs may be completed with a basic grant application such as this – only estimations may be provided.

22. Why was there not a feasibility study provided with the grant application?

As noted above, Cumberland modified the contract of that entity that had been hired to provide a feasibility study to aid and assist in completion of the Middle Mile Application prior to the time the feasibility study was completed. Apparently, it was believed that completing the application for this grant possibility was more important than completing a feasibility study to determine if the project was feasible.