

**“Internet for All Benzie County” (IFA-BC)  
Cherry Capital Connection, LLC (CCC)  
December 2023**

**Great progress Benzie County has made:**

Just a few years Benzie County began to identify unserved and underserved areas of Benzie County. Today there are currently multiple significant fiber construction efforts being conducted by Spectrum, Acentek, Point Broadband, ACD, Mercury Broadband, and CCC.

**RDOF** Continues no change.

**PPP** Continues with no changes.

**ARPA Internet for all – Benzie County**

- a. City of Frankfort, Crystal Lake Township, and Inland Township have sent corrections to bi-lateral agreements. These changes are being reviewed and resigned.
- b. Received MDOT permits for construction between Us-31 and Frankfort along M-115.
  - a. This required a small BCRC permit (received) and City of Frankfort permit (received)
  - b. Fiber North has been assigned the contract to construct mainline.
  - c. Passes 113 serviceable locations.
  - d. Miss Dig called for the route.
- c. Received MDOT permits for construction along Us-31 from Lake Ann road to Maple City rd.
  - a. This required a small BCRC permit (received) and City of Frankfort permit (received)
  - b. Fiber North has been assigned the contract to construct mainline.
  - c. When combined with BCRC permit will pass 260 serviceable locations.
  - d. Miss Dig called for the route.
- d. Inland and Crystal Lake approved land leases for Fiber Distribution Centers minor correction being applied. Has not delayed construction of Fiber distribution hut placement.
  - a. Huts placed.
  - b. Electrical inspection due Dec 8, 2023.
  - c. Propane tanks set.
  - d. Standby generators set.
  - e. Power expected by Dec 15, 2023 (consumers Energy)
- e. Material staging in Benzie County has begun.
- f. **Open access.**
  - a. Contract with COS for Consumer facing interface will be signed prior to year-end.
  - b. The test lab established that will allow testing of changes related to COS, CIENA, and Heights.
    - i. This represents our standard configuration for IFA-Benzie County
- g. First customers to be connected will be Crystal Lake Township and Inland Township
- h. The first meeting with Frankfort DDA has occurred.
  - a. Jan 9, 2024 9:00am CCC will present our plan for Frankfort construction of Fiber.

**ROBIN**

No impact on Benzie County associated with ROBIN 2.  
Community outreach continues.

**BEADS**

Benzie County, Mitch, and CCC provided a joint letter of support for Open Access for BEADS

## Other projects outside the funding scope of IFA-BC

- a. The final location for tower position was approved.
- b. CCC attended Merit meeting in Lansing.
- c. CCC attended 123Net Beads meeting in Lansing.

## Road Commission discussion

### Letter sent to Troy asking to attend December 14 meeting.

Troy Hinds per our discussion we will plan on attending the next Benzie County Road Commissioners meeting December 14, 2023 at 9:30am. We understand the Road Commission has hard costs that need to be recouped and we understand that Benzie County Road Commission and staff have policies and procedures that need to be followed. We understand that as the manager you do not have the authority to vary the fees schedule or how fees are applied. However, it is our understanding that the Road Commissioner can consider waiving fees.

Benzie County Road commission has fees such as "Boring under the road fee" that CCC and our engineering firm, CCC-Systems, have never experienced. CCC has experience with MDOT, Missaukee, Roscommon, Cheboygan and other counties that charge a flat fee permit in the range of \$150 to \$500.

#### A. **We are requesting BCRC waive the bore under road fee or consider making the following policy and procedure changes:**

1. Inspect, randomly 15% of the road bore crossings,
  - a. We assume you are inspecting the depth of crossing. This cannot be done until after the fiber is jettied.
  - b. Instead of inspecting 72 bores you would incur costs for inspecting 10 or 11 bores.
2. We are offering to provide some protection that CCC be required a single \$5K cash bond be deposited with the BCRC for the entire project.
  - a. This deposit would carry forward until the end of the Benzie County Internet for All project is complete.
    - i. We require our construction crews provide per road crossing proof of depth from their bore locator
      1. As we jet the fiber, we tone the fiber to verify depth
    - ii. It is worth noting we hold back 10% payment from contractors to ensure our inspection passes.
      1. It is rare that we find issues that require correction.
      2. Corrections are made prior to calling for an inspection from the BCRC.

#### B. Additionally, we heard that BCRC may move to a permit per road.

**We are requesting that a permit be allowed of a similar size as our current inland township permit. (15 to 19 miles)**

C. The ROBIN project is 190 miles of roadway. RDOF is estimated at 50 miles of roadway. CCC estimates 414 roads will be permitted. If the road crossing fee is applied and we average 6 crossing per mile we will experience \$100,000 in bore road crossing fees. If a permit was for just one road and the permit was \$500 we would experience over \$200,000 in utility permit fees. If fees we applied at the \$300,000 level, over 600 households would be negatively impacted.

**We are asking that these fees and the negative impact on the consumer be considered as a reason to waive these fees and work with CCC on reducing your hard costs.**

#### D. Create a utility lane

**We are asking BCRC to consider a utility lane road side of the ditch.**

Somewhere in the 18 to 23 foot from center line of roadway.

We bore and plow at a minimum of 40".

We compact any area along the road way we disturb.

Handholes and peds are located as far back in the row as possible.

We install a handhole every 2,000 feet and a PED every 350 feet.

Saginaw County created a utility lane in the 18 foot to 23 foot from center of roadway.

Missaukee county allowed CCC to construct fiber plant in the 18 to 20 foot lane.

This lane is the mailbox lane.

We were able to increase construction productivity by 2.5 times.

A utility lane, is a significant contributor in meeting MIHI and County desire for shorter timelines.

Shorter timelines enables connecting consumer (tax payers) quicker.

**Our goal is to create a trust but verify relation with BCRC and maximize the benefits to as many households in Benzie County as possible.**

### **History of Internet for All Benzie County:**

The Benzie County Commissioners have entered into a Public Private Partnership with Cherry Capital Connection (CCC) to connect the unserved and underserved in Benzie County.

Multiple government agencies have contributed public funds and support towards achieving this top economic goal for Benzie County.

Monetary contributions from FCC (RDOF), MIHI Office (ROBIN), Benzie county, and Crystal Lake and Lake townships are exceeding \$4.876 million. Untold labor hours have been contributed by organization like Chamber of Commerce, Grow Benzie, Broadband Committee, Benzie County EDC, and many more. The City of Frankfort and all township that provided bi-lateral agreements have waived all performance bond requirements.

Our commitment to these organizations is to maximize the number of households passed and connected and fiancé the funding gap. CCC has committed to meet the funding gap that is currently in excess of \$8 million.

ROBIN alone will pass 5,100 households and has partially funded (under 50%) the cost of connecting 1,400. 1,400 is our commitment for ROBIN. However, the state goal is to connect 95% of all households and the CCC goal through the end of 2026 is to connect 3,315 households.

Under ROBIN the EDC, Commissioners, and MIHI asked that CCC provide:

1. Highspeed internet to ACP eligible households at a net zero monthly cost,
2. Offer monthly subscription at a rate 75% below the published national averages for broadband,
3. Create an open access network,
4. A zero installation fee: CCC recently has eliminated the installation and activation fees,
5. Shorter construction timelines, and
6. An environment that all parties and stakeholders work together as a team to accomplish the county published goals.

To reach these goals requires efficiencies in construction, community cooperation, and reducing cost throughout all areas of the project.

We appreciate your consideration.

Troy if you have any questions before the meeting please feel free to reach out to me on my cell.

### **Evaluating other funding opportunities**

**Kind Regards - Tim Maylone - CEO and Managing Member, Cherry Capital Connection, LLC**