

Memo

To: Columbus City Council Members
From: Janet Hegland
CC: Elizabeth Mursko, City Administrator
Ben Gutknecht, Associate Planner
Date: 8.25/2021
Re: Broadband Expansion investment

Background

At the April 7, 2021 Special City Council meeting, the Columbus City Council passed a resolution seeking support from Anoka County to expand broadband services in the city of Columbus, which allocated \$300,000 of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding it will be receiving towards broadband expansion. On May 12th, Anoka County Commissioner Reinert notified the Council that the Anoka County Board of Commissioners passed a resolution to dedicate \$150,000 a year for two years and up to \$300,000 to all 21 cities in Anoka County as matching funds to help with broadband needs. It was later clarified by County Administrator Rhonda Sivarajah, that the matching commitment was for a one-time commitment of up to \$150,000. **This means Columbus has a total of \$450,000 to spend on Broadband expansion over the next two years from ARPA funds.** We will continue to seek out other funding opportunities that will allow us to continue on the trajectory we began last year, to bring high speed internet access to all neighborhoods in Columbus.

The purpose of this memo is to present a proposed plan and gain Council approval for allocating these funds to expand high speed broadband in Columbus over the next two years

Midco Proposal

There are three areas of Columbus that Midco proposed could be included on their construction schedule for 2022-2024 as outlined below.

Midco identified a larger build that encompasses Crossways, 145th, 141st and Jodrell that they could complete with \$400,000 in aid from the city. This would be 192 passings and they could commit to completion by the end of 2023. It would be fiber-to-the-premise, and a multi-year project with portions being completed in 2022. This would coincide with Midco's RODF area that we will build in 2023 (but we are not requesting any funds for). This calculated out to \$2,083/property.

In addition, Midco identified the area around Fontana Street. We could complete this area for an additional \$200,000 in aid and could commit to completion by the end of 2024. This would be an additional 63 homes and fiber-to-the-premise. This calculates out to \$3,174/property

Lastly, Midco had identified the area of Lyons Street that encompasses 9 homes, 6 in the city of Columbus and 3 in the city of Wyoming. We could complete this build for \$63,000 in aid (\$24,000 from Columbus

and \$12,000 from Wyoming). This calculates out to \$4,000/property assuming Wyoming would agree to fund the other 3 properties.

CenturyLink/Lumen

We have had several meetings with CenturyLink/Lumen and they have confirmed that the company remains very interested in Columbus. They have acknowledged that the work we did on the internet survey and subsequent outreach to their company has put us ahead of many other cities in regards to their ability to respond to our request to partner with the city to expand high speed internet in Columbus.

Initially they misunderstood the area that Columbus was interested in and CenturyLink's/Lumen's engineering planner had provided some preliminary estimates to serve 1,686 living units in the Columbus area. However, Elizabeth corrected this misunderstanding and has provided maps for 2 areas which are a subset of what was originally reviewed by the planner. Unfortunately the last 2 months, the planners have been working on a special project for the company and have not been able to get an updated estimate for the 2 areas. We reached out to our contacts and they said they would make an inquiry to the planning group and find out when they believe they can provide an estimate for the 2 areas.

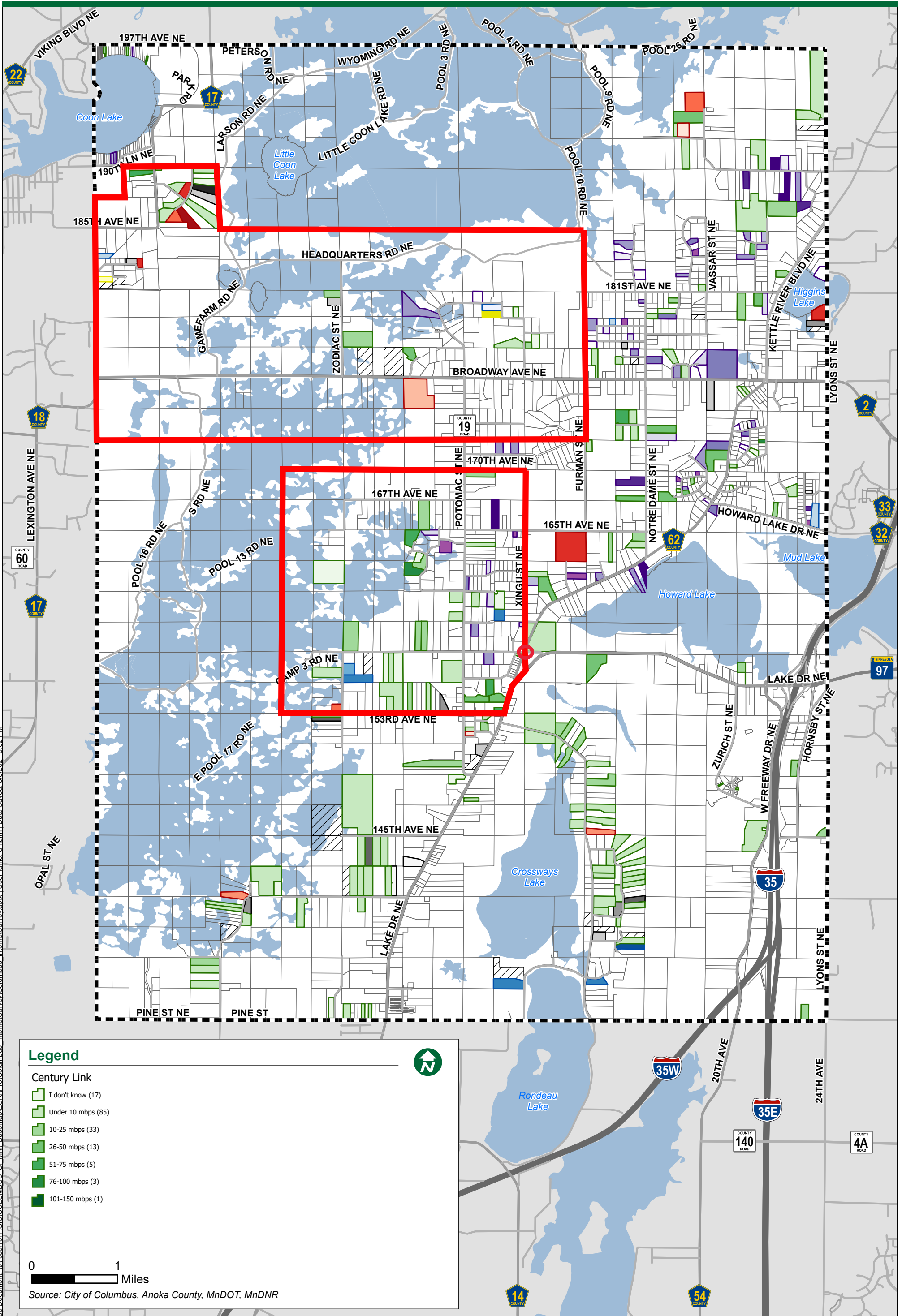
Recommendation

I would recommend we approve the larger area proposed by Midco that encompasses Crossways, 145th, 141st and Jodrell that they could complete with \$400,000 in aid from the city.

Two other considerations.

1. The Fontana Street proposal overlaps with the area that CenturyLink/Lumen is considering so it may make the most sense to hold off on any decision in that area until we have an estimate from CenturyLink/Lumen.
2. The area proposed by Midco on Lyon's street is an orphan section that is difficult because of the city's boundary with Wyoming. We would have adequate funding to complete the 6 households proposed but it would be contingent on an investment by Wyoming. This section is always going to be problematic because of where it is in relation to existing infrastructure. I would recommend we fund it if we can get Wyoming to fund the other 3 properties in their city.

If the Council approves the above recommendations, there would be a balance of \$26,000 left of ARPA funds that could be allocated to CenturyLink/Lumen when we receive their proposal. This funding, in addition to funds from EDA budget, may be adequate to fund some of what they will propose. Alternatively, these funds could also be added to any future funds we manage to obtain as dollars are allocated at the state and federal level for broadband infrastructure expansion. We would just need to be mindful of the deadline the funds have to be spent by.



Legend

Century Link

	I don't know (17)
	Under 10 mbps (85)
	10-25 mbps (33)
	26-50 mbps (13)
	51-75 mbps (5)
	76-100 mbps (3)
	101-150 mbps (1)

0 1 Miles

Source: City of Columbus, Anoka County, MnDOT, MnDNR

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