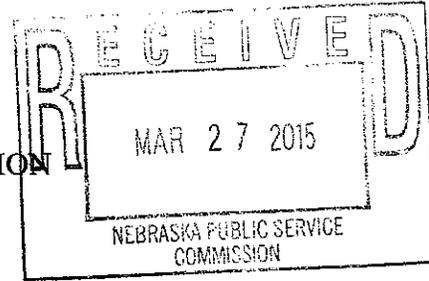


BEFORE THE
NEBRASKA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION



In the Matter of the Nebraska Public Service)
Commission, on its own motion, seeking to)
administer the Nebraska Universal Service)
Fund's Broadband Program: Application)
to the Nebraska Broadband Program)
Received from NebraskaLink Holdings, LLC)

Application No. NUSF-92.31

DIRECT TESTIMONY OF PAT LEACH IN SUPPORT OF APPLICATION

Q. Please state your name.

A. My name is Pat Leach.

Q. Please state your position with and the name of your current employer and provide a summary of your duties.

A. I am the director of Lincoln City Libraries in Lincoln, Nebraska. Lincoln City Libraries is a department of the City of Lincoln. Working both with the Mayor's Office and the Library Board, I oversee the provision of library service to Lincoln and Lancaster County, with responsibilities in budgeting, human resources, facilities management, and strategic planning.

Q. Please describe the Applicant and its business.

A. NebraskaLink Holdings, LLC ("NebraskaLink") is a collaboration of seven Nebraska rural, independent telephone companies. NebraskaLink has deployed a high-speed, progressive fiber network throughout the State of Nebraska. NebraskaLink promotes broadband adoption in both the public and private sectors by utilizing its statewide fiber network to offer competitive pricing, diversified routing, and reliable connectivity to local governments, educational institutions, wholesale carriers, Internet service providers and business customers. NebraskaLink submitted the

application in partnership with the Lincoln City Libraries (“LCL”). The LCL provides public library service to Lincoln and Lancaster County, relying on property tax support. LCL serves over 300,000 residents of the area via eight library locations, the Lied Bookmobile, various outreach endeavors, and the services of the library’s website, lincolnlibraries.org. At the end of the 2014 fiscal year, over 229,000 people held Lincoln City Libraries cards. Annual visits totaled 1.3 million.

Q. What is the purpose of your testimony?

A. My testimony is provided to support the application filed by NebraskaLink with the Commission seeking funding from the Nebraska Universal Service Fund Broadband Program (“Application”). The Application is incorporated in my testimony by reference.

Q. Can you generally describe the application?

A. Yes. NebraskaLink, in partnership with the Lincoln City Libraries, will construct a dark fiber network comprised of twelve fiber strands for the use of the Lincoln City Libraries. This proposed fiber network will interconnect the eight Lincoln City Library locations to the fiber network in order to increase greatly the speed and capacity of the library’s Internet service. It will allow for a connection to Network Nebraska, a collaborative Internet provider used by Lincoln Public Schools and other educational entities. The Lincoln City Libraries project would provide superior broadband at 128 Internet access computers distributed throughout all eight library locations during the library’s 450 open hours each week. Staff members of the Lincoln City Libraries are accustomed and experienced both in providing Internet access and assisting people using Internet.

Q. Are there any additional details and supporting information in the Application?

A. The Lincoln City Libraries’ current broadband connections do not provide enough

bandwidth to keep up with the needs of our customers, especially with more information being presented via video and audio. The construction of fiber connections for all LCL locations will allow the library to provide the broadband that people expect and need, and to serve a quickly growing number of Lincoln Public Schools students who will be issued tablets and other devices as part of the school curriculum. Several LCL facilities are well-placed to serve people who are low-income. The Bennett Martin Library downtown serves an area with the lowest per capita income of our five largest libraries. The Dan A. Williams Library in the Arnold Heights neighborhood provides services to an area with the lowest per capita income of the eight libraries in Lincoln. In September of 2014, the Pew Research Center published a report, "Census: Computer ownership, Internet connection varies widely across U.S.," noting that 21% of households have no regular Internet access. From the Pew Report, "What will digital life look like in 2025? Highlights from our reports" in December of 2014 comes "The problems of privacy and digital divides could worsen." Thus, we expect a continued need to provide Internet access for part of our community into the future, ensuring the long-term impact of this project. As the library continues to serve the community, we have been collaborating with additional organizations, including AIM for Brilliance, which presents "coding dojos" for young people. These events introduce young people and their parents to the world of coding, and we promote the program in schools with a high number of low income families. We chose to begin with elementary students for this program because our current bandwidth would not be able to handle the need required by a coding program for middle school and high school. This project would allow us to host this kind of program, along with the National Day of Civic Hacking and similar events, which we currently cannot do well.

Q. Do you support the Staff recommendation regarding the Application?

A. Yes. I appreciate the Staff's recommendation to approve the Application and believe that the Commission should adopt the Staff's recommendation regarding the Application.

Q. Does this conclude your testimony?

A. Yes, and I want to express my thanks and appreciation for this opportunity. Access to broadband is a critical component to the success of individuals and communities.

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

The undersigned hereby certifies that on this 27th of March, 2015, the original, five copies and an electronic copy of the foregoing pleading was delivered to:

Nebraska Public Service Commission
Shana Knutson
1200 N Street, Suite 300
Lincoln, NE 68508
Shana.Knutson@nebraska.gov

Windstream Communications
Russell Westerhold
Fraser Stryker PC LLO
500 Energy Plaza
409 South 17th Street
Omaha, NE 68102-2663
rwesterhold@fraserstryker.com


Jessica Meyer