

**Frontier CASF Broadband Infrastructure Grant Application – Knights Landing / Robbins / Grimes
Item #1 - Project Summary**

Applicant: Frontier California, Inc. (U-1002-C)

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Project Title: Knights Landing, Robbins, Grimes FTTP

Location: Knights Landing, Robbins and Grimes/Counties of Yolo, Sutter, and Colusa

Type: Middle-Mile / Last Mile

Grant Request: \$4,590,845 (100% Funding Requested)

PROJECT SUMMARY

Frontier California Inc. (U-1002-C) (Frontier) is applying for a \$4,590,845 grant from the California Advanced Services Fund (CASF) Broadband Infrastructure Grant Account to deploy middle-mile and last mile fiber to the premise (FTTP) facilities that will provide High Speed Internet (HSI) to 104 unserved CASF-eligible households in the regions of Knights Landing and Robbins within the counties of Yolo and Sutter. The project also includes the essential addition of middle-mile fiber transport to the Grimes Wire Center in Colusa County, which is critical to the overall project. Frontier refers to the collective areas of this proposal as the Knights Landing, Robbins, Grimes FTTP Project (Project). Frontier requests that the California Public Utilities Commission (Commission) grant full funding for this project in the amount of \$4,590,845.

The Project would provide for middle-mile and last mile infrastructure deployment to provide service to customers with minimum symmetrical speeds of 50 Mbps and maximum symmetrical speeds of up to 1 Gbps using fiber optic technology. This Project would make these services available to five community anchor institutions, which include Knights Landing Branch Library, Science and Technology Academy at Knights Landing, Robbins Elementary, Grimes Branch Library and Grand Island Elementary and 27 businesses. In addition, 12 non-CASF Frontier households will benefit from the equipment upgrade and will enjoy the same speeds. Service will also be made available through Frontier’s low-income broadband programs described later.

The Project covers approximately .41 square miles and upgrades existing facilities capable of providing fiber optic HSI and OTT services. Six miles of inter-office fiber transport will be placed from Robbins to Knights Landing and another 26 miles of fiber inter-office fiber will be placed from Knights Landing to Grimes to greatly enhance both availability of broadband to unserved customers and enhance infrastructure supporting current and future services in these communities. Frontier would leverage its existing network from the Grimes wire center to the Internet peering points to provide expandable transport capacity for the additional customers that will be served in Knights Landing and Robbins. These middle-mile facilities are essential indispensable to provide broadband speeds that will be scalable for the next 30 years to these rural remote cities. It is estimated that this Project will be approximately 13% aerial and 81% underground installation with major equipment expenses including, but not limited to, packet switching network equipment that supports fiber to the premises infrastructure. The estimated construction timeline, after all permits are secured, is within the two-year window as required by D.18-12-018 (issued December 20, 2018) (Decision), Frontier does not anticipate this project would be exempt from CEQA, and therefore, would not qualify for ministerial review.

FUNDING RATIONALE

Under the CASF rules adopted in the Decision, Frontier asserts that the proposed project qualifies for 100% funding – \$4,590,845 – which represents the full projected costs to provide service to 104 unserved, CASF-eligible households.

The Decision provides a table which summarizes criteria for funding level determinations. According to this table, only projects in low-income areas or without any service from an existing facilities-based provider (a “dial-up only” area) are eligible to receive up to 100% funding. According to the California Interactive Broadband Map, all census blocks are unserved and eligible for CASF funding. The proposed Knights Landing, Robbins, Grimes FTTP Project qualifies for 100% funding as it meets the following criteria:

Criteria	Reimbursement
Baseline for Eligible Project	60%
Presence of dial-up only (all households)	40%
TOTAL	100%

- **Areas with only dial-up or no Internet connectivity:** The proposed build resides within an area that is currently not served by any form of wireline or wireless facilities-based broadband and proposes a cost-effective expansion of broadband access to 104 unserved CASF-eligible households; the proximity of this infrastructure upgrade will also enhance services to an additional 12 non-CASF Frontier households.
- **Location and accessibility of the area:** The Commission interprets this category to mean that the Legislature directed the Commission to award higher funding levels in remote areas, as specified. The Decision directs Staff to award more funding if an applicant proves a proposed project area meets two of the five characteristics outlined below; this Project meets three of the five, as shown below in bold:
 - The proposed project area contains rugged or difficult terrain (e.g., mountains, desert, national or state forest);
 - ✓ **The proposed project area is an unincorporated community;**
 - ✓ **The proposed project area is more than 10 miles from the nearest hospital**
 - The proposed project area is more than 10 miles from the nearest state or federal highway; and/or;
 - ✓ **The proposed project area is located in a rural census block, as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau.**
- **Existence of communication facilities that may be upgraded to deploy broadband:** The Commission interprets this category mean that the proposed project relies primarily on existing infrastructure. This project plans to leverage Frontier’s existing infrastructure (including poles, conduit) and existing easements and/or right-of-way following existing copper routes, and thus will be less expensive to build.
- **Significant contribution to achieving the program goal:** The proposed Project would make a significant contribution to the CASF program as the area within the Connected Capital Area Consortium (CCAC) and the Upstate California Connect Consortium (UCCC) regions are served at 97.4% and 78.7%, respectively, falling below the 98% goal set forth in AB 1665.
- **Low-Income Service:** The proposed project area qualifies as low-income community with median household incomes ranging from \$46,250 - \$47,927, all of which fall below the CARE standard of \$52,400 as required by this Decision.
 - ✓ *Low-Income Plan:* Frontier features a choice of two low-income programs for customers: Frontier Fundamental and Frontier Affordable Broadband. The Frontier Affordable Broadband product requires customers to be enrolled in Lifeline telephone service. Alternatively, the Frontier Fundamental product is a stand-alone low-income broadband program that does not require a customer to purchase telephone

service. Both products will provide minimum symmetrical speeds of 50 Mbps.

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

The Project will support the goal of achieving 98% broadband service availability in the CCAC and the UCCC. Based on latest CPUC broadband availability data (as of December 31, 2018), the CACC is served at 97.4%, with Yolo and Sutter Counties served at 96.2% and 96.9%, respectively, and the UCCC served at 78.7% with Colusa County served at 63.5%. Frontier is a primary service provider in the region, rendering this project vital in the larger goal of providing service to those on the wrong side of the Digital Divide.

While the primary goal of the Project is to bring broadband service to unserved households, it provides substantial current and future benefits to all households and businesses in the Robbins and Knights Landing Wire Centers by providing fiber-optic inter-office transport connectivity to the world.

The Project will support faster and more reliable broadband capability to be available to area fire stations. Enhanced Internet service capabilities are critical for public safety communications allowing first responders to send and receive critical voice, video and data during emergencies and disasters.

The Project will expand and upgrade internet service in Yolo and Sutter Counties benefiting residents and community anchor institutions in areas such as schools, libraries, healthcare, economic and workforce development, and resiliency, among others. This enhanced Internet access will also allow these counties to better reach and provide services and information to rural residents and businesses, and access tools and resources that can help to optimize internal processes to achieve cost efficiencies.

The Project provides HSI access that is integral in connecting teachers to students, parents and educational resources. Rural school teachers and administrators acknowledge connectivity limitations as a primary obstacle to effectively using technology in the classroom. Additionally, students lacking internet connectivity at home are at a disadvantage when completing assignments that require online access and interaction. This point was recently reported in a survey conducted in school districts in the UCCC region in March and April 2020. School districts in Colusa County reported the lack of available HSI service in many student households, which prevented students to attend online classes. As more bandwidth intensive material moves online – such as educational videos, interactive learning tools, and video conferencing tools for teachers – connection speed is quickly becoming a major issue for rural educators. This project will be important to reduce these barriers through expanded Internet access in Yolo and Sutter Counties.

The Project will provide high-speed access to the world, opening employment opportunities and economic growth in this rural area. This area, with lower population density, will be able to offer entrepreneurs, small businesses and individuals with work-at-home opportunities, the ability to live in more affordable rural areas, while contributing to the local economy. Businesses need broadband to access online training and classes to improve their employees' skills. Rural businesses do not have the budgets to send employees to professional development or are too small to send an employee away from operations. Bringing professional development in-house by enabling HSI access reduces those challenges. Additionally, improved broadband access, speed and capacity allows businesses to expand their markets, diversify their funding streams and attract their workforces.

Area farmers and ranchers will also benefit from HSI service as it provides innovative technological tools use to maintain greater control over crop and livestock production, processing, distribution, and storage resulting in greater efficiencies, lower prices, safer growing conditions, safer foods and reduced environmental and ecological impact.

Rural healthcare facilities and rural residents seeking healthcare services will greatly benefit from this project, as the healthcare sector is emerging as a heavy user of Internet services. The evidence is strong for technologies that lower costs, connect remote populations, and expand the reach of urban-centered medical expertise. Furthermore, telehealth

can connect physicians with physicians and patients with physicians and provide access to specialists for treatment of multiple conditions.

Senator Jim Nielsen also supports this project which will greatly benefit area residents.

The application for this Project is a modest funding request for a region of the state that is severely unserved and underserved, and therefore is a prudent use of funds to help close the Digital Divide.

In addition to preparing this application for the CASF Infrastructure Grant Account pursuant to the existing rules and regulations, we have worked with the Regional Consortiums to identify anchor institutions within proximity of the fiber middle-mile backhaul deployment that would benefit from connectivity to the new network. If the Legislature and Administration authorize additional support to expand the opportunity for critical broadband expansion beyond last mile deployment, Frontier stands ready to work with qualified anchor institutions to support higher-speed Internet service.

This grant application creates important potential opportunities for anchor institutions help advance broadband in low-income, underserved communities along the path of deployment by supporting distance learning and telehealth-telemedicine, both in response to COVID-19 and to build for the future to secure "Broadband For All."

Census Blocks Covered

61010509002177	61010509002194	61010509002196	61010509002208
61010509002215	61010509002216	61010509002221	61010509002223
61010509002290	61010509002291	61010509002305	61130114002027
61130114002028	61130114002029	61130114002030	61130114002031
61130114002034	61130114002038	61130114002039	61130114002040
61130114002157	61130114002168		

ZIP Code Covered

95645

Area Map

