

MAP Project Highlights



Where:

Lac qui Parle County, located in Minnesota on South Dakota's border.

Problem:

Lack of broadband access for residents and local businesses.

Solution:

MAP assisted with the planning for a county-wide survey and study to assess existing services and needs.

Improving one county's broadband access

MAP staff became involved with Lac qui Parle County's broadband project in November 2007. The county is very rural with only 8,000 residents and is located in Minnesota on South Dakota's border, about 60 miles north of Sioux Falls.

Broadband access is a problem for residents outside of the small towns, which are served by cable, and for businesses that need to download and send large files. This is especially true of healthcare facilities that need to send x-rays and MRIs.

Putting together a steering committee is a tricky business for broadband projects. The first order of business is a county-wide master plan study which should be conducted by an independent broadband architect. In early 2008, MAP staff provided a list of architects and urged county officials to avoid any study by local ISP's to ensure an objective evaluation of the area's broadband needs. Foundation grants were obtained for an open-access network study.

MAP staff also was involved in a county-wide survey of existing broadband use. The county was provided with phone-sampling techniques and may use senior citizens to conduct the survey. Once completed, the county will be in a better position to improve connectivity for all residents.

A wireless company sent a representative to a steering committee meeting in the summer of 2008 and expects to have basic service available for all residents in a fairly short period of time. Having a flat topography helps the county in providing wireless services. The major goal at the time of this writing was to bring business-class fiber broadband to the community.

MAP helps revitalize small communities and tribal nations in nine states by working with them to find solutions for their infrastructure, enterprise development, aging, technology, or training issues.

MAP is a member of the Rural Community Assistance Partnership. RCAP is a national network of regional nonprofit organizations that provide comprehensive, on-site technical assistance and training to help small, rural communities address their drinking water, wastewater, and other community development needs.

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