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March 29, 2023

To the Office of the Chief Information Officer of the State of Iowa,

We are EXCITED to apply in the Invitation to Qualify for a Broadband Opportunity Zone in northwestern Marion County. Marion County Development is a department of county government and completing this application on behalf of Marion County with the support of the Marion County Board of Supervisors. Marion County invested in the recent broadband study completed with the Greater Des Moines Partnership which illustrates our dedication to enhancing broadband to support our growth plans.

**JOB:** Marion County is one of Iowa's growing micropolitan areas ranking in the top 1% of all US counties for percentage of jobs in manufacturing with nearly 8,000 manufacturing jobs. This includes the addition of 1,000 new manufacturing jobs over the past 5 years within existing industry. With the rise of flexible and hybrid work demands, growing companies need to connect with employees not only on the job, but allow for them to work from their residence. The geographic area of concern includes rural companies such as Slideways and LDJ Manufacturing in addition to many home-based businesses and farming businesses.

**TOURISM:** In addition, the area has a triple crown tourism industry as home to Iowa's largest lake-Lake Red Rock, the Knoxville Raceway-Sprint Car Capital of the World and Pella-America's Dutch Village. The geographic area of concern includes several key rural campgrounds at Marion County Park, Roberts Creek Park, Cordova Park, Elk Rock Park, Fifield Park, Marina Cove, Whitebreast Park and Wallashuck. There are over 600 campsites at these parks which all operate with online reservations systems.

**RESIDENTIAL:** Marion County has invested nearly \$20 million to support housing development growth in Pella, Knoxville, and Pleasantville over the past three years after the completion of a housing study by Maxfield Research in 2016. Now under construction and planning, these developments could add over 1,000 new housing units. Marion County is poised to complete another housing study to anticipate future growth in 2024. Much of the growth in the area has occurred in the rural portion of the county around Lake Red Rock as well as around Pleasantville which falls into out geographic area of concern.

**CHALLENGE:** Marion County broadband growth is challenged by having the largest body of water in Iowa in the middle of the county. This asset attracts tourists and residents but makes it difficult to create redundant loops and the terrain associated with the creeks leading to the lake create challenges to deploy other types of un-wired broadband.

The combination of terrain challenges and growth opportunities, make the northwestern corner of Marion County a critical opportunity zone for broadband. This area includes the highway corridors of Highway 5 and Highway 163 which are both 4-lane as well as state highways 92 and 14. These areas are key for future industrial, commercial and residential growth in Iowa. Thank you for consideration of this request.

Cordially,

*Carla Eysink*

Carla Eysink, IOM  
Executive Director



# MARION COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS



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Kisha Jahner, Chair  
Mark Raymie  
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To the Office of the Chief Information Officer of the State of Iowa:

Marion County, Iowa is submitting this application in response to the OCIO Invitation to Qualify for a Broadband Intervention Zone. This zone features major growth corridors along four-lane highway 5 and 163 as well as primary highways which include 92 and 14.

Broadband is a critical component to rural growth and this portion of our county has needs for enhanced services for both residents and businesses. As such, we are proposing that a Broadband Intervention Zone be established for the area which includes areas near Pleasantville, Otley, Knoxville and Lake Red Rock, Iowa's largest lake.

Marion County ranks in the top 1% of US counties for percentage of jobs in manufacturing with nearly 8,000 manufacturing jobs. In the past 5 years, over 1,000 new manufacturing jobs were added. Marion County has invested nearly \$20 million in housing projects around the county. In addition, tourism to Marion County generates over \$55 million.

It is our hope that the ITQ application and review by the OCIO will designate the northwest corner of Marion County as a geographic area of concern by designating it a Broadband Intervention Zone.

Sincerely,

Kisha Jahner, Chair