

Eligibility and Demonstrated Experience

The Coon Rapids Municipal Utilities (CRMU) is a locally-owned and controlled municipal utility that has been providing services to people in the Coon Rapids area since 1937. CRMU currently offers electric, natural gas, water, wastewater and communications services to the immediate area.

In 1982, the Coon Rapids Municipal Utilities pioneered municipal cable television in Iowa by building its own system. The original system was a 300 MHz plant capable of broadcasting about 35 channels. As time went on, the demand kept growing for more channels with limited plant capacity. Like many towns in rural Iowa, local leaders became concerned about the community's growth. As internet services became available in the larger communities in the early 1990's, city officials questioned whether Coon Rapids businesses and residents would have access to all the new technology that was being provided in other parts of Iowa and the nation.

To address this concern, city leaders decided to form a communications task force in 1996 to explore the possibility of providing communication services such as telephone, expanded cable and internet access. The sixteen member task force, which represented all segments of the community, talked to local residents and gathered information about other communication ventures and technologies. The task force reached the conclusion that the establishment of a communications utility was very feasible and that the matter should be presented to the local residents in a public referendum.

On August 6, 1996 by an 87% approval, the citizens voted to establish a municipally owned cable communications or television system. Then by an 82% margin, the citizens voted that the communications utility should be placed under the management and control of the existing utility board. Before the end of August, CRMU had already begun offering dial-up internet.

In 1998, CRMU began construction on a new 750 MHz hybrid fiber-coax communications system. The system was built with a 96 fiber-optic ring architecture to provide complete redundancy on the fiber optic backbone. All existing cable television services were transferred over to the new system and in 1999, CRMU became one of the first municipalities in the country to offer local telephone, high speed internet and cable television services to its residents.

This 750 MHz system served the community well for the next 18 years until increasing bandwidth demands dictated that a change was necessary. So in 2017, CRMU overbuilt the community once again with a Fiber-to-the-Home network (FTTH). This network provided every house and business with a direct fiber connection to CRMU's Network Operations Center. With the FTTH technology, residents of Coon Rapids now have the fastest and most reliable way to access the Internet and can work from home as easily as in the office.

As part of this project, CRMU will be extending this FTTH network to residents and businesses in the rural areas around Coon Rapids.