CITY OF LAUREL
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Craig A. Moe
Mayor

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August 1, 2022

Hon. Gina M. Raimondo
Secretary of Commerce
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Raimondo:

The City of Laurel together with our Department of Information Technology (City of Laurel) by this letter expresses its strong support for the application of Baltimore Gas and Electric (BGE) for funding for its *Connected Community – Middle Mile* project through the U.S. Department of Commerce / National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) "Enabling Middle Mile Broadband Infrastructure Program" (Middle Mile Program).

The City of Laurel is located in northern Prince George's County, Maryland and is home to over 15,000 households and businesses. We know how critical digital access is to our community – no matter your age or ability because it provides great opportunities for our residents and businesses to learn and grow. The focus is not just on connectivity, but on equity – to increase choice and increase affordable options for high-speed broadband.

Through its Middle Mile project, BGE will leverage its utility transmission corridors to deploy a fiber backbone across central Maryland, to both: (1) support reliability and resilience of its energy delivery system – enabling, in part, new clean energy technologies such as solar, electric vehicles and more; and to (2) improve affordability, access and resiliency of internet service for communities, anchor institutions, internet service providers and other data carriers – through both last mile community and institution partnerships as well as dark fiber leasing opportunities.

As a potential last mile connection partner through BGE's Middle Mile project, BGE's proposed middle mile fiber backbone aligns well with the City of Laurel's communications strategy and digital equity goals in a variety of ways, including:

Deploying low-cost middle mile fiber that lowers the cost entry for new Internet Service Providers (ISPs) that could provide low-cost, high-speed broadband options for our residents and businesses

Specifically, BGEs route passes several communities of lower income around Laurel, MD that would benefit from more equitable broadband options.

Several anchor institutions that play a vital role in their local communities and economies also are located in proximity to the BGE route enabling redundant and reliable access to broadband options for these organizations.

Providing an opportunity to partner and potentially add resiliency and redundancy to Laurel's own municipal fiber optic network, which supports many critical municipal offices and functions.

BGE's Middle Mile project illustrates the strong potential for innovative, transformational public-private partnerships that can help local communities and institutions. The City of Laurel urges the NTIA to approve BGE's application for funding, emphasizing that BGE's Middle Mile project's middle mile infrastructure will benefit digital equity in the City of Laurel by improving affordability in our market; this program will reduce interconnection costs for last-mile providers and provide opportunities for competitive providers to offer last-mile service, a key prioritization criteria for NTIA's Middle Mile Program.

The City of Laurel looks forward to continuing to discuss last mile opportunities with BGE in order to make the vision of a more connected Maryland a reality.

Sincerely,

Craig A. Moe
Mayor

cc: Kevin P. Frost, CIO, Department of Information Technology
Council Read File