



Infrastructure for Michigan's Peninsula and Critical Crossings Project



Peninsula Fiber Network (PFN) has secured a major middle mile broadband infrastructure grant from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) that will improve the resiliency of Michigan's internet network and help expand broadband connectivity to underserved areas of the state. The \$87 million project includes a \$61.2 million grant from the NTIA Middle Mile Broadband Infrastructure Program. PFN and its partner 123NET will match 30% of the grant funding by investing \$26 million in the project.

The project includes three routes crossing Michigan's lakes, unserved and underserved counties, and towns, to bring middle mile infrastructure to over 35,000 homes in need of broadband internet connection. The installation of under-sea fiber optic cables creates additional resiliency for Michigan's broadband network by connecting Michigan's Peninsulas and connecting Michigan to a neighboring state, major city, and major Internet Exchange Point.

Once construction on these routes is complete, PFN and 123NET will offer wholesale broadband services at reasonable rates to other broadband carriers, including those that provide or plan to provide broadband service to households in unserved areas.



The three middle mile broadband routes in the project include:

Route #1 Lake Michigan Crossing – Chicago Connection

This route constructs two underwater fiber optic connections between Benton Harbor/St. Joseph and Chicago, and a fiber optic connection on land from Benton Harbor to Byron Center.

Route #2 Lake Michigan Crossing – Peninsula and Island Connection

This route connects Michigan's peninsulas with an underwater fiber optic cable from the town of Gulliver in the Upper Peninsula to Beaver Island and then to Charlevoix in the Lower Peninsula with a fiber optic connection on land from Charlevoix to Gaylord.

Route #3 Port Huron to Flint

Middle mile fiber optic cable will connect Port Huron to Flint, serving unserved and underserved areas in Lapeer, Macomb, St. Clair, and Genesee counties.



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Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is meant by “middle mile” broadband infrastructure?

A: Middle mile is the internet’s backbone. It connects major exchange points in the US to local exchange points, allowing internet service providers to bring high-speed connections to local communities, businesses, and homes. For PFN, this project creates additional redundant loops in our resilient network.

Q: Who will own the broadband infrastructure supported by this grant?

A: PFN and 123NET will own and operate the broadband infrastructure and will offer wholesale broadband services to other broadband carriers, including those that provide or plan to provide broadband service to households in unserved locations.

Q: How long will it take to install the middle mile fiber routes and when will construction be complete?

A: PFN has 5 years to complete the construction of these three routes in accordance with NTIA’s grant compliance guidelines. Construction on the routes will begin after NTIA approval of environmental & historical preservation assessments.

Q: Will PFN install the broadband itself, or will it use other contractors?

A: PFN is responsible for the construction of the broadband infrastructure and meeting construction milestones according to the NTIA’s compliance guidelines. Much of the construction work will be performed by contractors.

Q: How reliable and resilient is fiber when installed in the lakebed?

A: Unique to Michigan’s geography, the undersea fiber lines provide alternative routes to connect the Upper and Lower Peninsulas, and Chicago. Fiber installed below the lakebed is less likely to be impacted by severe weather patterns and other catastrophic events, making it ideal for a redundant and resilient fiber network.

Q: Once it is installed, will other service providers be able to utilize this middle mile broadband infrastructure?

A: PFN and 123NET are required by the NTIA to operate these fiber routes as an open access network – which means any provider can utilize this broadband infrastructure. PFN and 123NET will offer wholesale services on this network at reasonable rates.

Q: Will this middle mile infrastructure determine the speed and costs available to end-users?

A: Although the fiber PFN is installing is capable of 400G speed, the local ISP will determine the exact service available for end users. Local providers will also determine their rates of service. PFN and 123NET will offer wholesale broadband services at reasonable rates to any broadband service provider; including cellular, wholesale carriers, and ISPs that will utilize this middle mile infrastructure to provide broadband service to households in the nearby unserved and underserved areas.

Q: How many people will be served by the broadband being installed thanks to this grant?

A: These three routes will bring much needed middle mile infrastructure to Michigan and pass 35,000 households in need of broadband service. End user providers can utilize this middle mile infrastructure to connect these unserved/underserved locations to the internet.