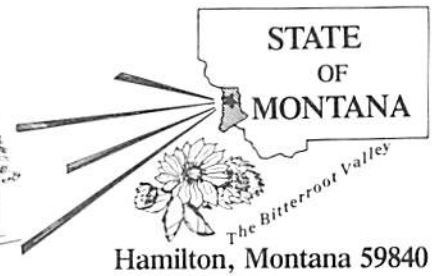


COUNTY OF RAVALLI



Ravalli County Commissioners
215 S. 4th Street, Suite A
Hamilton, MT. 59840
406-375-6500
commissioners@rc.mt.gov

August 15, 2015

State of Montana
Public Service Commission
Commissioner Bob Lake
1701 Prospect Ave
P.O. Box 202601
Helena, MT 59620-2601

Dear Public Service Commissioner Lake,

The purpose of this letter is to share our concern regarding the lack of broadband Internet service in Ravalli County. Because the Commission has authority with public utilities we will be confining this letter to issues specific to CenturyLink. There are many areas in Ravalli County that are broadband deficient. This deficiency adds to the burden of rural Montana and the small businesses that make up our community and its economy.

Following are three examples that demonstrate our point.

1. A company with over 20 employees located 2.8 miles from the center of Hamilton is paying over \$1,000 per T1 line to CenturyLink. This antiquated technology is the only option. This company had to move their location to obtain quality, reasonably priced Internet.
2. A startup company in Stevensville located 4 miles from the center of Florence can't obtain any Internet access other than Satellite. It is likely that she will spend \$8,000 to \$10,000 to install Internet from an as yet unknown provider.
3. Ravalli County Economic Development Authority (RCEDA) has a complaint in to the Commission that is ongoing. The claim is regarding incorrect billing that has resulted in RCEDA being required to over pay in excess of \$1,000. Other entities have been billed for their long distance. They have attempted to resolve this situation for over a year with CenturyLink. The complaint, submitted in April, is not yet satisfied.

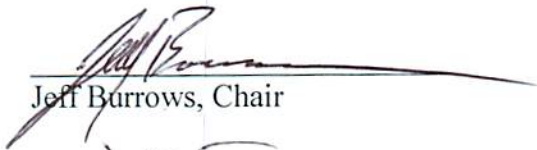
These issues cost small businesses time and money. Fairly priced, broadband is vital if rural Montana is to compete with the rest of the world. It is difficult to attract new businesses without

broadband. We risk losing locally grown companies that need broadband. We can't hope to have a supply of sustainable good paying jobs for citizens without broadband.

Today, Ravalli County is the state's seventh most populous county at 40,060. Employment growth has lagged behind both state and federal trends. About 19.8% of the population in Ravalli County lives below the poverty line. Ravalli County is doing all they can to develop well-defined plans for economic growth. We work to provide predictability for business expansion by providing appropriate space for industrial businesses, technology businesses, value-added commodity businesses, education, and housing that is readily available at a realistic cost for the workforce when considering the average wages in the area. The Federal Communications Commission Report [<https://www.fcc.gov/reports/2015-broadband-progress-report>] describes the problems in Ravalli County. We request that the Montana Public Service Commission hold CenturyLink accountable for spending the funds they receive for infrastructure in rural areas. We are all aware that CenturyLink's equipment in Ravalli County is outdated and cannot provide the technology necessary to compete in today's world.

Thank you for your consideration of our serious broadband problems.

Sincerely,
BOARD OF RAVALLI COUNTY COMMISSIONERS



Jeff Burrows, Chair



Greg Chilcott, Member



J.R. Iman, Member



Ray Hawk, Member



Doug Schallenberger, Member