

### **E-rate**

We have submitted our Form 470 for Category 2 equipment and services. We submitted for approximately 38 network switches as many of our switches still have useful life but they are approaching the end of their life where Extreme Networks will continue to provide a maintenance agreement to service the switches in the event of needed maintenance or failure.

We also submitted for putting in “dark fiber” connections as e-rate has changed their rules that if dark fiber connections are more cost advantageous over a 20-25 year life span than “managed lit fiber” that they will now fund these projects. There has been much interest by companies providing these connections to school districts around the country. Potentially there is also money available at the state level that would pay the district portion of these projects. As BPS is a 90% free and reduced school district our e-rate subsidy is at 85% so BPS pays 15%. We are seeking “dark fiber” connections for Babb, BMS and BHS although logistically only BMS and BHS are likely to be bid on but the bidding window is still open and we know more when the bidding window closes mid-March.

What is “dark fiber” and “lit fiber”? Both are typically run in trenches and protective conduit in the ground. Functionality when everything is working, there is no difference. “Dark fiber” is a full run from our switch in one building to another switch in another building without a providers switches in the middle managing things whereas “lit fiber” has a provider in the middle managing some portion of the districts network. In almost all cases, districts prefer “dark fiber” connections and seeing some of the projects being funded in Missoula and Great Falls we are optimistic we will have successful bids/funding as well.

### **T-Mobile cell tower progress**

It’s a process but we do have some positive news where the site work has begun out at the high school for the cell tower. There is no official timeline when the tower will be completed and operational but the current projectory would be sometime this summer of 2022.

### **Internet Access for students and low income families**

We are encouraging families to visit with the folks at Siyeh Communications about getting a subsidized internet connection for their residence. Recent CARES Act legislation passed into law makes up to \$50 per month available to low income families to get internet access and up to \$75 for those individuals living on tribal lands. Siyeh will work with families coming into the office and help them make application to USAC/E-Rate and see if they qualify. There are several federal programs that are automatic qualifiers such as Medicaid and SNAP along with some other assistance programs.

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Another requirement is that Siyeh is able to get service to the house and most locations in the town of Browning area have that access along with some wireless options in the Starr School and other areas.

We encourage all families to apply now and not wait until there is a need. This is not restricted to families of students and is open to any and all, just stop by the Siyeh Communications office and they will help everyone coming in to apply. This also helps Siyeh getting more families signed up as they can show the need for services and assist them being able to pursue other grant opportunities to expand both their service area and reliability.