

STATE OF INDIANA

INDIANA UTILITY REGULATORY COMMISSION

IN THE MATTER OF THE PETITION OF )  
LIGTEL COMMUNICATIONS, INC. FOR )  
DESIGNATION AS AN ELIGIBLE )  
TELECOMMUNICATIONS CARRIER FOR ) CAUSE NO. 41052 – ETC 88  
THE PURPOSE OF RECEIVING RURAL )  
DIGITAL OPPORTUNITY FUND PHASE I )  
SUPPORT )

**PETITIONER’S RESPONSE TO MARCH 18, 2021 DOCKET ENTRY**

Ligtel Communications, Inc. (“Ligtel” or “Petitioner”), by counsel, hereby responds to the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission’s March 18, 2021 Docket Entry as follows:

**Request No. 1:** Please identify any other companies or entities (either affiliated or unaffiliated) with which Petitioner is partnering, or intends to partner, in offering or providing supported services in Indiana, including the specific services covered under Ligtel’s provisional award of Federal Communications Commission (“FCC”) Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (“RDOF”) Phase I support. If applicable, please explain whether each partner is an affiliate or subsidiary of Petitioner or an unaffiliated entity.

**Response:** Petitioner will provide all RDOF-supported services using its own facilities and equipment, specifically, its own fiber-to-the-home (“FTTH”) broadband network and its existing metaswitch, and does not intend to partner with any other entities in providing the same. Petitioner is affiliated with The Ligonier Telephone Company, Inc., but they are not partnering in Petitioner’s provision of RDOF-supported services.

**Request No. 2:** Please identify which of the following certified communications services that Ligtel will use to fulfill its voice telephony obligations (consistent with General Administrative Order (“GAO”) Item No. 3):

- Facilities-based local exchange service, as certified in Cause No. 41706;
- Resale of local exchange service, as certified in Cause No. 41706;
- Both facilities-based local exchange service and resold local exchange service; or
- Interconnected VoIP service, offered as a telecommunications service to all eligible residential and small business customers in the requested ETC designation area.

**Response:** Petitioner will use facilities-based local exchange service, as certified in Cause No. 41706, to fulfill its voice telephony obligations.

**Request No. 3:** Please explain whether Petitioner will offer its proposed RDOF services to all eligible residential and small business customers, and to all high cost/RDOF non-Lifeline subscribers and Lifeline subscribers, in the proposed ETC designation area at rates that are reasonably comparable to rates in urban areas for similar services.

**Response:** Yes, Petitioner will offer its proposed RDOF services to all eligible residential and small business customers and to all high-cost, non-Lifeline subscribers and Lifeline subscribers in the proposed ETC designation areas at rates that are reasonably comparable to rates in urban areas for similar services.

**Request No. 4:** Does Ligtel use the term “local telephone service” (for example, as that term is used in Mr. Mead’s testimony) to mean “voice telephony service” as that term is defined in 47 C.F.R. §§ 54.101(a) & (b)?

**Response:** Yes, Petitioner uses the term “local telephone service” to mean “voice telephony service” as defined in 47 CFR §§ 54.101(a) and (b).

**Request No. 5:** Please confirm whether Petitioner will offer a stand-alone unbundled voice telephony (telecommunications service) plan with unlimited usage that is available to all eligible residential and small business customers, including both high cost (RDOF)/non-Lifeline and Lifeline subscribers, in Ligtel’s proposed designated ETC area at rates that are reasonable comparable to rates for similar services in urban areas.

**Response:** Petitioner will offer a standalone unbundled voice telephony plan with unlimited usage that is available to all eligible residential and small business customers, including both high-cost/non-Lifeline and Lifeline subscribers, in Petitioner’s proposed designated ETC service area at rates that are reasonably comparable to rates for similar service in urban areas, as listed in the FCC’s annual Urban Rate Survey.

**Request No. 6:** Ligtel stated in its Petition that it will deliver broadband at speeds of up to 1 gigabyte symmetrical and zero latency. Ligtel was silent regarding its proposed minimum usage allowance. However, for FCC Performance Tier 4, ETC applicants are required to offer broadband at speeds of at least 1 Gbps/500 Mbps with a minimum monthly usage allowance of at least 2 Tb/month, with an additional commitment of either low latency or high latency. Please confirm that Ligtel will offer at least one broadband plan that meets the FCC RDOF requirements for Performance Tier 4 (“Gigabit”) and one of the latency options to all eligible residential and small business customers in its proposed ETC designated service area.

**Response:** Petitioner will offer at least one broadband plan that meets the FCC RDOF requirements for Performance Tier 4 (Gigabit) and one of the latency options to all eligible residential and small business customers in its proposed ETC service area. Specifically, Petitioner will offer at least one plan with speeds of at least 1Gbps/500Mbps with low latency (<100ms). Petitioner does not have data caps on any broadband service.

**Request No. 7:** Please identify the minimum downstream and upstream broadband speeds, the monthly usage allowance, and the latency commitment that Ligtel will offer to subscribers of the “1 Gig package” referred to in Petitioner’s evidence.

**Response:** Petitioner will offer speeds of at least 1Gbps downstream and 500Mbps upstream with low latency (<100ms) to subscribers of the “1 Gig package” referred to in Petitioner’s evidence. Petitioner does not have data caps on any broadband service.

**Request No. 8:** Mr. Mead testified that the terms and conditions of Ligtel’s Lifeline plan will be advertised on Ligtel’s website. Please provide the website address and a screenshot showing the locations of the Lifeline plan advertisement on Ligtel’s website.

**Response:** The terms and conditions of Petitioner’s Lifeline plan is advertised on its website at [www.ligtel.com/about-us/company-information-2/lifeline-assistance.html](http://www.ligtel.com/about-us/company-information-2/lifeline-assistance.html). A screenshot of this page is attached hereto as **Exhibit A**.

**Request No. 9:** Please identify all 65 Indiana census blocks provisionally awarded to Ligtel by the FCC and explain any discrepancies between those 65 blocks and the 58 blocks listed in Exhibit B. If necessary, provide an amended Exhibit B. Please also confirm that the requested census blocks are all within Noble County.

**Response:** Petitioner has attached hereto an amended Exhibit B to its Verified Petition, which lists all 65 census blocks for which Petitioner was awarded RDOF funding and now seeks ETC designation. All of the 65 awarded census blocks had not been properly transferred to the original Exhibit B, resulting in the omission of seven awarded census blocks.

**Request No. 10:** Please provide a complete list of the census blocks for which Ligtel is seeking ETC designation in an Excel spreadsheet, pursuant to GAO 2019-5 (Item No. 6(c)).

**Response:** Contemporaneously herewith, Petitioner is filing in this Cause an Excel spreadsheet listing the census blocks for which Petitioner is seeking ETC designation.

**Request No. 11:** Please amend Exhibit A to the Verified Petition by adding a legend to clearly explain the information presented in the map. At a minimum, please clearly mark the census block boundaries on the map for each census block you list in the Excel spreadsheet and Exhibit B (including any amendments thereto). Please also explain the meaning of the symbols in Exhibit A, which include pushpins, squares, and letters.

**Response:** Petitioner has attached a revised Exhibit A to the Verified Petition that contains a legend clearly marking the census block boundaries on the map for each census block listed in amended Exhibit B. The symbols included in the original Exhibit A to the Verified Petition are no longer included in the Revised Exhibit A to the Verified Petition.

**Request No. 12:** Is each of the census blocks for which Petitioner seeks ETC authority located entirely within the one of the cities and towns in Noble County listed in Exhibit A of Verified Notice of Change # CSP0906-4? Please explain your response.

**Response:** No, many of the awarded census blocks are located outside of city or town limits and are located in rural farm areas. Contemporaneously herewith, Petitioner is submitting a Notice of Change to its Certificate of Territorial Authority to become authorized to provide the RDOF-supported services throughout Indiana, which will encompass all of the awarded census blocks.

**Request No. 13:** Do any of the census blocks for which Petitioner seeks ETC designation include any areas outside of the boundaries of one of the specific cities and towns in Noble County listed in Exhibit A of Verified Notice of Change # CSP0906-4? Please explain your response.

**Response:** See response to Request No. 12.

**Request No. 14:** Ligtel requests a waiver of the requirement in GAO 2019-5 (Item No. 10) to file a five-year improvement plan. In lieu of filing a five-year improvement plan, please provide more information regarding Petitioner's plan to provide the supported voice and broadband services to its proposed service area.

**Response:** Petitioner will use state-of-the-art technology to service the customers in the requested ETC service area. For voice service, the technology supports both TDM and IP technologies and is redundant. Petitioner is not planning any major upgrades to its current technology in the next five years. Its current voice technology consists of a Metaswitch CH6010 Class 5 IP softswitch that it uses for PSTN services. It will use that environment to provide phone services to the ETC/RDOF territory. The loop technology is fiber-to-the-premise ("FTTP") using Calix electronics and fiber cable. Service will be delivered via private SIP to Calix ONTs as is done for existing ILEC customers. The ONTs are SIP clients and have POTS ports on the unit. The Metaswitch and all required servers are connected to Petitioner's provider network via multiple redundant 1Gb fiber links to Petitioner's ASR9904 MPLS core router via a Cisco Catalyst 9300 switch. The Catalyst 9300 is capable of 480Gb and is linked to the ASR9904 via a 20Gb LAG (two 10Gb SFP+ copper connect cables). The Metaswitch connections are trunk links for both internal SIP traffic, as well as links to Petitioner's session border controllers for external SIP trunks. Petitioner also has multiple T1 connections to Frontier, Sprint and IFN (Intelligent Fiber Network). Any external SIP trunks are routed through Petitioner's redundant Metaswitch session border controllers for security and reach the internet via its BGP router, the ASR9006. Petitioner's FTTP network will be built out within the RDOF-funded area in accordance with RDOF-required deployment milestones.

**Request No. 15:** In its Petition, Ligtel states, among other things, that "each of Ligtel's customers is supplied with a residential gateway that includes a NAT firewall. WPA2 encryption is also standard on the included wireless access point to protect network traffic and end point devices. Ligtel also has a redundant pair of Cisco IPS/IDS (Intrusion Prevention and Detection System) appliances protection network services at its central office." Pursuant to GAO 2019-5

(Item No. 12), please describe the specific consumer protections and service quality standards that will be implemented for Ligtel's voice telephony telecommunications service customers in Indiana.

**Response:** Petitioner provides a robust network than ensures a high grade of service to the customer. In the TDM world, Petitioner engineers its network to meet a P.01 blocking percentage, which ensures that calls are not blocked due to network congestion. Now that IP is the primary technology, Petitioner upgrades XGS-PON ports when traffic approaches 80 percent of the 2.5G capacity. This upgrade is done via reducing the number of subscribers served by the XGS-PON port, essentially reducing the number of subscribers below 64. Petitioner upgrades backhaul links when peak period load begins to exceed 60 percent. These backhaul link upgrades consist of adding 10G links to the LAG groups connecting the Calix E7s to the Cisco backbone routers and adding 10G links to LAG groups connecting the Cisco routers. Internet interconnect links are upgraded when peak load begins to exceed 70 percent, and will be upgraded by adding 10G links or upgrading to a 100G link to the upstream carriers. By aggressively providing over-capacity on all segments, congestion that could affect VoIP call setup or voice quality is avoided.

Customers that do have service problems are served by Petitioner's local personnel. Its goal is to repair all customer troubles within 24 hours in normal circumstances with the exception major disasters. If customers have prolonged outages, they are eligible for a service credit for the number of days of the outage.

**Request No. 16:** Please explain the following:

- a. Whether and how Petitioner will distinguish between local and non-local minutes (including toll minutes);
- b. Whether Ligtel will charge Lifeline subscribers a fee for toll calls in addition to the per month or billing cycle price of the subscriber's Lifeline services;
- c. Whether Ligtel will offer toll blocking, toll control, or both (Mr. Mead testified that Ligtel will offer toll imitation to qualifying low-income subscribers in the requested ETC service area);
- d. Whether Ligtel's Lifeline subscribers will have their local exchange service disconnected for non-payment of toll charges; and
- e. Whether and how Ligtel will offer Lifeline subscriber credits for both voice telephony-broadband bundles and voice telephony-only service consistent with current FCC regulations, as well as the dollar amounts of those credits and the associated terms and conditions (e.g., broadband speeds and usage allowances), as well as the expiration date (if any) for the credits.

**Response:** In response to Request No. 16, Petitioner states as follows:

- a. Petitioner determines if a call is local or non-local primarily by comparing the

originating telephone number to the termination telephone number. However, in some cases additional information, such as the jurisdictional indicator parameter, the LRN or IP address, may be used to validate the jurisdiction of the call.

- b. Petitioner's Lifeline service is for local and extended area calling service. Toll calls are not included. Customers may have their line restricted from allowing any toll call with their associated fees to be blocked. If customers do order service that allows toll calls, Petitioner charges an additional fee for each toll call based on the duration of the call.
- c. Petitioner will offer toll blocking service at no additional charge to qualifying low-income subscribers in the requested ETC service area.
- d. Petitioner does suspend service if toll charges are unpaid, but it does offer a payment plan to customers requesting it.
- e. Petitioner will offer voice and broadband bundle and voice-only service discounts via the Lifeline program, which currently provides a \$9.25 credit toward broadband/voice bundles and a \$5.25 credit for voice only. There is a limit of one Lifeline credit per household. The standalone voice credit will expire as of December 1, 2021. Petitioner may participate in other federal low-income programs, which will be extended to qualifying customers in the requested ETC service area.

Respectfully submitted,

By: /s/ Jeremy L. Fetty  
Jeremy L. Fetty (26811-06)  
Aleasha J. Boling (31897-49)  
PARR RICHEY FRANSEN  
PATTERSON KRUSE LLP  
251 N. Illinois Street, Suite 1800  
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204  
Telephone: (317) 269-2500  
Facsimile: (317) 269-2514  
Email: aboling@parrlaw.com  
jfetty@parrlaw.com

*Attorneys for Ligtel Communications, Inc.*

**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I hereby certify that a copy of the foregoing Petitioner's Response to March 18, 2021 Docket Entry has been electronically served upon the following this 22<sup>nd</sup> day of March, 2021:

Indiana Office of Utility Consumer Counselor  
115 W. Washington Street, Suite 1500 South  
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204  
infomgt@oucc.in.gov

/s/ Jeremy L. Fetty

Jeremy L. Fetty (26811-06)  
PARR RICHEY FRANSEN  
PATTERSON KRUSE LLP  
251 N. Illinois Street, Suite 1800  
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204  
Telephone: (317) 269-2500  
Facsimile: (317) 269-2514  
Email: jfetty@parrlaw.com


## Exhibit A

ligtel.com/about-us/company-information-2/lifeline-assistance.html

(260) 894-7161 contactus@ligtel.com

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in



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**Lifeline Assistance**

LigTel Communications offers Lifeline Assistance to eligible customers. Lifeline Assistance provides eligible residential customers with a \$7.25 discount on monthly local phone service or a \$9.25 discount on monthly broadband internet service when selecting a speed package of 20/3 or greater. Exceptions may apply to the speed package, please contact LigTel Communications to inquire. Lifeline Assistance is available to all residential customers who meet the following requirements:

- Customers, their dependents, or their household must be participants in one of the following programs: Medicaid, SNAP, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), federal public housing assistance (Section 8) or the Veteran's or Survivor's Pension Benefit.
- In addition, a customer may be eligible if his or her household income is at or below 135% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines.

To apply for Lifeline Assistance, please contact our office at (260) 894-7161. Application forms for Lifeline Assistance are available in our office. Lifeline customers must annually recertify their continued eligibility by the anniversary of their service initiation date.



**Exhibit A**

**Designated Service Area**

*(Amended as of March 22, 2021)*

Census Block Group ID:  
181139721003

	Census Block Group 181139721003
	6 Census Blocks Requested
	Requested ETC for Census Blocks
	Service Area
	Census Block Boundary/ non requested block
	Neighboring Census block group
	Regulated Service Boundary

Ligonier

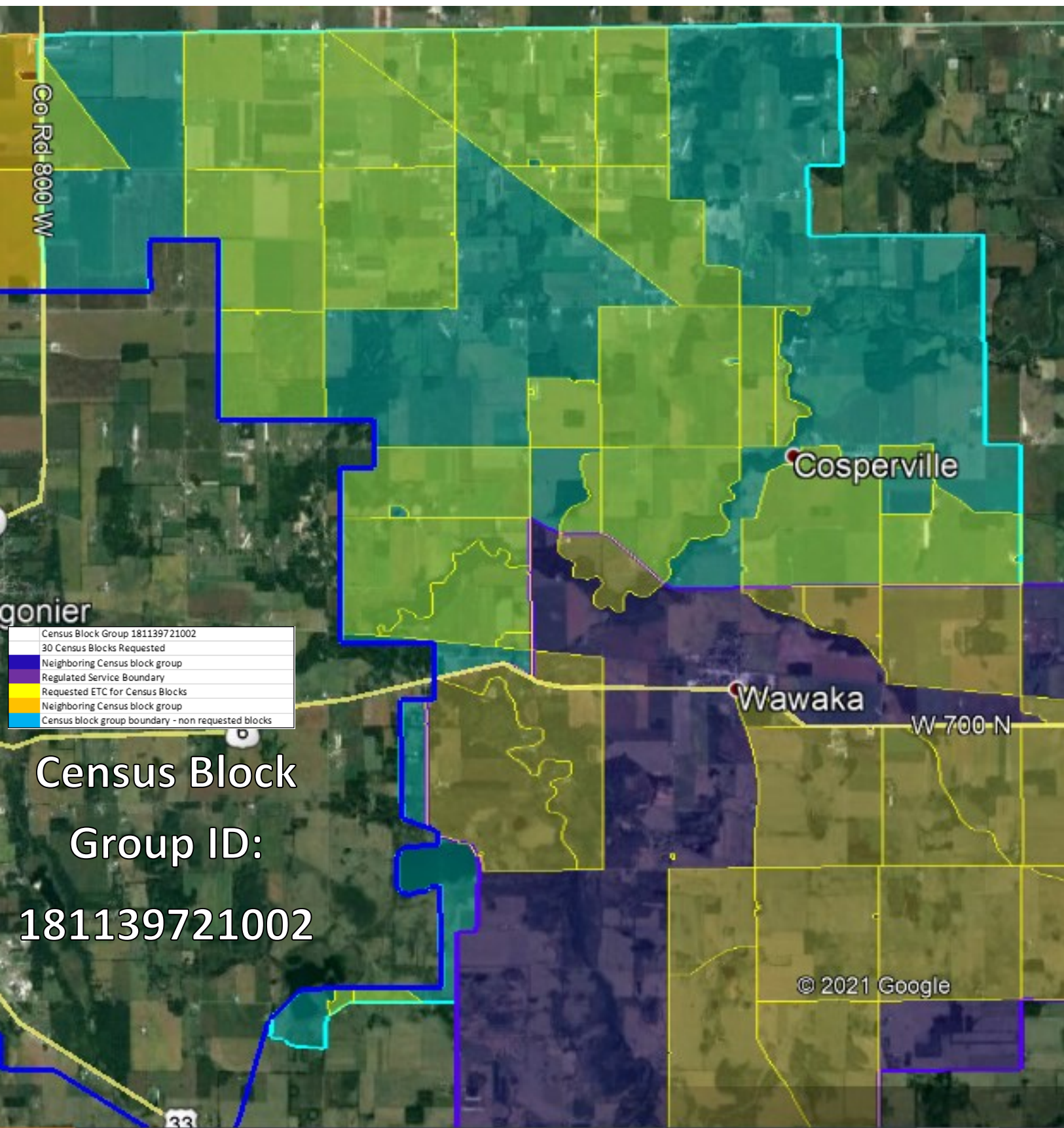
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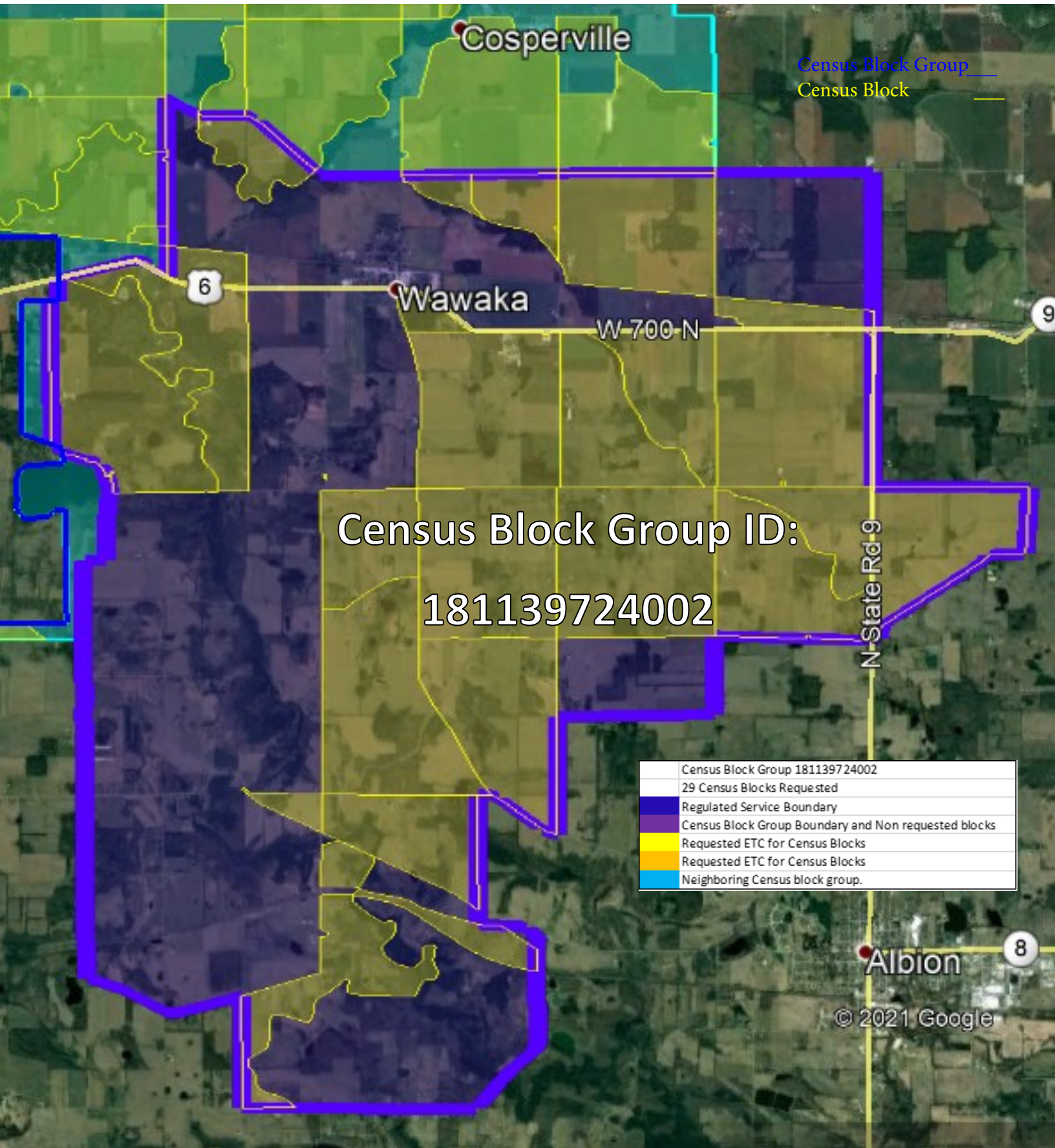


Census Block

Group ID:

181139721002





**Exhibit B**  
**to Verified Petition**  
*(Amended as of March 22, 2021)*

**Census Blocks**

181139721002007  
181139721002010  
181139721002012  
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181139721002027  
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