

**From:** [Courtney Fleming](#)  
**To:** [Puco Docketing](#)  
**Subject:** PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF OHIO - CASE #: 00652392 [ ref:\_00Dt0GzXt.\_500t0dK5cY:ref ]  
**Date:** Wednesday, December 16, 2020 5:19:52 PM  
**Attachments:** [Karen Sheppard.pdf](#)

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**PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF OHIO  
Consumer Service Division  
Memorandum**

**CASE ID:** 00652392  
**COMPANY:** AKRON-CANTON REGIONAL FOODBANK  
**CUSTOMER:** Karen Sheppard  
**ADDRESS:** 350 Opportunity Parkway, Akron, Ohio 44307  
**SERVICE ADDRESS:** 350 Opportunity Parkway, Akron, Ohio 44307  
**AIQ:** Ohio Power Company  
**NIQ:**

\*\*\*To ensure your response attaches to the appropriate case, please reply to this email without changing the subject line. Thank you!\*\*\*

**DOCKETING CASE #:** 19-1475-EL-RDR

**SUBJECT:** Ohio Power Company - Smart Grid

Please docket the associated customer comment and/or attached in the case number referenced above under "Public Comments". This information was received by the Consumer Services Division through alternate channels and is being forwarded to be filed formally. This information is not the opinion of Staff and should not be viewed as such.

Sincerely,

**Courtney Fleming**  
Public Utilities Commission of Ohio  
Service Monitoring and Enforcement Department  
Customer Service Assistant  
(800) 686-PUCO (7826)  
[www.PUCO.ohio.gov](http://www.PUCO.ohio.gov)

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December 15, 2020

Public Utilities Commission of Ohio  
RE: AEP Ohio's GridSmart Phase 3 Application Broadband Access Proposal  
Case # 19-1475-EL-RDR

Dear Commissioners of the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio:

AEP Ohio has submitted a proposal as part of its GridSmart Phase 3 application that would provide for expanded broadband access in rural areas of the state. According to AEP, their proposal would enable broadband providers to tap into a fiber optic network and serve our residents and businesses. As the events surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic have highlighted, broadband access is critical for our students to learn, our businesses to thrive and grow and our communities to prosper.

When the pandemic subsides, we will still need access to reliable high-speed internet services. High-speed internet is critical for economic development of all types. Factories and warehouses need reliable broadband the same as many tech facilities might. It can usher in new healthcare options, including telehealth, which can enable better health outcomes for residents in our area. And high-speed internet access can be an equalizing factor in education. Having access at home means learners won't have to search for public access points at libraries or fast food restaurants.

According to AEP, our communities have been left with limited options because we are small and extending services to us hasn't been a priority. However, AEP Ohio believes their plan can help eliminate a significant barrier to access by allowing internet service providers to tap into their fiber network.

AEP Ohio is building a fiber network as part of their next-generation electric grid buildout. They believe a small additional investment would allow internet service providers access to a middle-mile network that could be used to provide high-speed internet access to customers in smaller rural communities and other underserved areas. Further, they suggest this middle-mile piece is the "missing link" in bringing high-speed internet service to these underserved areas, and that allowing AEP Ohio to construct middle-mile network infrastructure will allow internet service providers to focus their investments on providing access to Ohioans currently without high-speed internet.

AEP Ohio states that the additional investment that they would make to implement the proposal in their plan is cost-effective and would be subject to your oversight. Any revenues they earn from leasing the lines to providers would be used to cover the cost of building and maintaining the network, and our communities would get more reliable electric service and access to technology that can help our residents find new opportunities.

The Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank certainly believes that Ohioans in rural areas deserve to share in the same learning, economic development and societal benefits that broadband internet service can help facilitate. Although we are far from experts in this field, we have faith in AEP Ohio's commitment and integrity. When they say access to these opportunities, along with better healthcare access and other benefits can be accomplished through AEP Ohio's proposal, we believe them. We ask that you seriously consider granting AEP Ohio's request and help bridge the digital divide.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Daniel R. Flowers".

Daniel R. Flowers  
President & CEO

**This foregoing document was electronically filed with the Public Utilities**

**Commission of Ohio Docketing Information System on**

**12/17/2020 8:38:19 AM**

**in**

**Case No(s). 19-1475-EL-RDR**

Summary: Public Comment of Daniel R. Flowers, President & CEO, Akron-Canton Regional food Bank, submitted by Karen Sheppard, via website, electronically filed by Docketing Staff on behalf of Docketing