

**JEFFERSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

AGENDA REQUEST

TO: Board of Commissioners

FROM: Philip Morley, County Administrator

DATE: August 23, 2010

RE: Update on Jefferson County Broadband and Economic Development

STATEMENT OF ISSUE:

Team Jefferson staff Katherine Baril and Bill Wise will brief the Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) about the award of a major Broadband Technology Opportunities Program grant by the U.S. Department of Commerce to the Northwest Open Access Network (NoaNet). This broadband grant includes more than \$3,000,000 in fiber and wireless broadband investments for the Jefferson County Broadband Coalition, led by Team Jefferson.

Team Jefferson will also provide updates on other economic development initiatives in Jefferson County.

ANALYSIS:

TEAM JEFFERSON was instrumental in convening the Jefferson County Broadband Coalition to work with NOA Net to submit a grant proposal to provide fast, high speed broadband throughout East Jefferson County. The Jefferson County Broadband Coalition was awarded over \$3 million by the Department of Commerce on August 18th.

Noa Net now has funding to lay fiber and set up wireless systems to link over 30 "community anchor" sites throughout East Jefferson County. This was made possible with the participation of fire departments and law enforcement through JeffCom 911's current tower infrastructure project.

This grant ensures fast-speed access at our "anchor institutions". our libraries, schools, the hospital, government offices, emergency response and fire teams, and hubs that will be available in the future to be linked and connected for business development and home access. This investment is truly significant for Jefferson County.

Broadband is just one initiative of Team Jefferson, and part of an emerging Shared Economic Development Strategy. The August 23 briefing will also update the Board on some of Team Jefferson's other initiatives.

FISCAL IMPACT:

No direct impact, briefing only.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Board hear the briefing, and ask clarifying questions, as appropriate.

REVIEWED BY:

Philip Marley, by JD
County Administrator

Aug. 19, 2010
Date

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Secretary Locke Joins Representatives Inslee and Baird in Announcing a \$54.5 Million Recovery Act Investment to Expand Broadband Internet Access and Expand Economic Growth in Washington State

Submitted on August 18, 2010 - 10:30am

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, August 18, 2010

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Secretary Locke Joins Representatives Inslee and Baird in Announcing a \$54.5 Million Recovery Act Investment to Expand Broadband Internet Access and Expand Economic Growth in Washington State

Remarks

U.S. Commerce Secretary Gary Locke today joined U.S. Reps. Jay Inslee and Brian Baird at the Seattle Central Library to announce a \$54.5 million American Recovery and Reinvestment Act investment to help bridge the technological divide, boost economic growth, create jobs, and improve education and healthcare in difficult terrain both east and west of the Cascades mountain range in Washington state.

The grant to the Northwest Open Access Network (NoaNet) State of Washington Broadband Consortium will bring high-speed Internet access across 25 of Washington's 39 counties and connect the region to the rest of the state's digital economy. Earlier today, Vice President Joe Biden announced approximately \$1.8 billion in new projects that will create jobs and expand economic opportunities within 37 states across America.

"This critical investment will lay the groundwork for sustainable economic growth by connecting difficult terrain both east and west of the Cascades that has been without the full economic, educational and social benefits of high-speed Internet," Locke said. "This \$54.5 million grant to NoaNet will pay dividends for decades by expanding high-speed Internet access to schools, libraries, healthcare providers and public safety facilities."

NoaNet's State of Washington Broadband Consortium project aims to deliver enhanced, affordable broadband capabilities to community anchor institutions and local Internet service providers across 25 of Washington's 39 counties by augmenting NoaNet's existing fiber-optic network. The project intends to support advanced telemedicine services, connect dozens of libraries, boost bandwidth available at regional schools that currently suffer from network problems when too many users try to access the Internet at once, and enable public safety entities to access JusticeNet, Washington state's integrated network that supports state judicial system institutions. This project would complement NoaNet's earlier BTOP award that is funding the construction of 831 miles of fiber-optics in southeastern and southwestern Washington. The project plans to enhance connectivity to six Indian tribes in the state, including the Tulalip Tribes of Washington, the Kalispel Tribe of Indians, the Yakama Nation, the Lower Elwha Kallam Tribe of Indians, the Suquamish Tribe and the Port Gamble S'Kallam Tribe of Indians.

"Investment in Broadband will be a fuel for the engine of our economic recovery," said Inslee. "NoaNet's State of Washington Broadband Consortium is one more link in our economic chain that will bring broadband access to underserved communities in the 1st district, and build upon the open Internet that has created millions of new jobs and given thousands of Washingtonians access to the global marketplace."

"This is a great example of the Recovery Act at work, investing in our infrastructure with increased broadband Internet access," Baird said. "Rural areas make up a large part of southwest Washington, and high-speed Internet access in these areas will help level the playing field. Small businesses can better compete regionally and nationally, and our kids can take advantage of greater educational opportunities for generations to come." U.S. Sens. Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell, Gov. Chris Gregoire, and U.S. Reps. Norm Dicks, Jim McDermott and Rick Larsen also praised today's award.

"This investment will help bring affordable and high-speed broadband access to underserved communities across Washington state," said Murray. "Broadband Internet is no longer a luxury, it's a necessity – for small business looking to expand and create jobs, and for communities hoping to provide families with access to better health care and better education. I was proud to fight for investments in broadband expansion that will take us closer toward our goal of bringing high-speed Internet to every corner of Washington state."

"Delivering reliable broadband service represents an investment in our communities and our economy, improving access to crucial services in rural communities and extending educational, business and employment opportunities to Washingtonians who live in rural parts of the state," said Cantwell. "The \$54 million grant awarded today to the Northwest Open Access Network will improve connectivity to community anchor institutions, such as schools, libraries, and healthcare facilities, as well as to six Native American tribes across the state. This project will lead to more affordable and accessible broadband service for up to 86,000 households and 14,000 businesses and connect as many as 285 anchor institutions across Washington."

"This is great news for communities across Washington state," Gregoire said. "It's these types of investments that have real results for Washingtonians. Expanding our broadband access puts people to work immediately – and creates jobs, educational opportunities, and improves community safety for the future."

“As it extends high-speed Internet connections beyond the urban areas in our state, I am encouraged that this grant will create jobs and promote economic development on the Olympic Peninsula,” said Dicks.

“Washington state – especially the city of Seattle – has long been ahead of the curve when it comes to understanding the importance of broadband technology, and I think there is no better region that will better utilize this funding,” McDermott said. “This project will not only improve connectivity for countless Washington state residents, but will equip our region’s public safety entities and health care organizations with cutting edge technology. I’m pleased that the administration recognizes that improving broadband connectivity is a priority, and I want to thank them for recognizing that Washington state will put these funds to good use.”

“Expanding broadband access will create good jobs in our communities and help build a foundation for future economic growth by connecting homes, hospitals, colleges and businesses across northwest Washington,” said Larsen. “It is critical that we help our local institutions thrive in a 21st century economy. Expanding broadband services to our rural communities will allow them to access information, create new educational opportunities and make the connections they need to grow and thrive in today’s economy.”

President Obama signed The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 into law on February 17, 2009. It is designed to jumpstart the nation’s economy, create or save millions of jobs, and put a down payment on addressing long-neglected challenges so that the country can thrive in the 21st century. The Act includes measures to modernize our nation’s infrastructure, enhance energy independence, expand educational opportunities, preserve and improve affordable health care, provide tax relief, and protect those in greatest need.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provided a total of \$7.2 billion to the Department of Commerce’s National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) and the Department of Agriculture’s Rural Utilities Service (RUS) to fund projects that will expand access to and adoption of broadband services. NTIA is utilizing approximately \$4 billion of that funding for grants to deploy broadband infrastructure in the United States, expand public computer center capacity, and encourage sustainable adoption of broadband service.





Today's announcement is part of the second round of BTOP grant awards, which will continue on a rolling basis. NTIA will make all BTOP awards by September 30, 2010, and has thus far invested in 179 BTOP grants to benefit communities nationwide.

(Fact sheets with further information about all BTOP grants are available on the NTIA program website here: <http://www.ntia.doe.gov/broadbandUSA>).

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