

March 30, 2010

## **Gov. Nixon gives support to proposals from across Missouri to expand broadband access with federal funds**

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. - **Gov. Jay Nixon** is supporting 12 different proposals from across Missouri that would expand broadband Internet access in rural and underserved parts of the state for health care, business, education and consumers. Those proposals - from private companies, local governments and rural electric cooperatives - have been submitted for federal funding through the Recovery Act.

Missouri is partnering with those businesses and agencies to expand broadband through **MoBroadbandNow**, a five-year initiative launched by Gov. Nixon last summer. The initiative coordinates efforts to obtain funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Commerce specifically set aside for broadband expansion.

MoBrandbandNow seeks to expand broadband accessibility to 95 percent of the total population, a significant increase from current projected accessibility of 79.7 percent. Five of the applications supported by the State of Missouri are for developing **middle-mile** infrastructure for broadband; six are for developing **last-mile** projects; and one is for developing **public computing centers**, which will provide broadband access in public locations, often targeting a specific vulnerable population such as low-income, minority, disabled or unemployed Missourians.

"These proposals were closely reviewed, and we identified the ones we believe are most likely to receive federal funding and most closely aligned with the vision of MissouriBroadbandNow," **Gov. Nixon** said. "This public/private cooperation will carry lasting benefits in bringing high-speed communication to Missourians across the state, including giving doctors better and quicker resources to treat their patients; allowing teachers and students to access the power of educational tools that other schools have; and putting small businesses on a level playing field with their competitors from around the world."

The proposals were reviewed by a team of subject matter experts representing several state agencies, including the Public Service Commission and the Office of Administration. The middle-mile proposals that received letters of support from the Governor included:

- BlueBird Media, of Columbia, which plans to build a middle-mile network in northern Missouri;
- Boycom Cablevision, of Poplar Bluff, which plans to build a middle-mile network along the U.S. Highway 60 corridor in southern Missouri and into the Bootheel;
- Sho-Me Technologies, of Marshfield, which plans to build a middle-mile network in central and south central Missouri;
- SpringNet, a division of City Utilities of Springfield, which would provide broadband to customers in the metropolitan Springfield area; and
- American Fiber Systems, of Rochester, N.Y., which plans to provide connections to several Metropolitan Community College facilities in Jackson County.

The last-mile proposals that received letters of support from the Governor included:

- Big River Telephone Company, of Cape Girardeau, which would provide broadband to households and businesses in southeast Missouri;
- Cass County, which would provide broadband to households and businesses in western Missouri;
- Co-Mo Electric Cooperative, of Tipton, which would provide broadband to households and businesses in west-central Missouri;
- Finally Broadband, of Seymour, which would provide broadband to households and businesses in south central Missouri;
- Socket, of Columbia, which would provide broadband to households in central Missouri; and
- United Electric Cooperative, of Savannah, which would provide broadband to households and businesses in northwest Missouri.

The public computing center proposal supported by the Governor is being submitted by YourTel America, which would create eight public computing centers at retail centers, including five in the Kansas City area, two in the St. Louis area, and one in St. Joseph. These public computing centers also will focus on bringing broadband access to vulnerable populations of Missourians.

In addition to these applications, the Governor said Missourians also would benefit from a proposal filed by the Missouri Department of Higher Education to create 23 public computing centers with 736 workstations at seven community colleges - Jefferson College, Metropolitan Community College, Mineral Area Community College, Moberly Area Community College, Ozarks Technical College, St. Louis Community College and Three Rivers Community College. The centers will provide public access with knowledgeable staff and with courses in basic digital literacy and technology careers. The centers at the colleges also will function as technology centers for launching new careers, with a focus on unemployed and underemployed Missourians.

These project applications now will be submitted to the federal government for funding as part of the second round of grants. In the first round, Ralls County Electric Cooperative in New London, a MoBroadbandNow partner, received a \$19.1 million competitive award from the U.S. Department of Agriculture in January to expand broadband Internet to thousands of residential and commercial customers in northeast Missouri.