



Public Service Commission of Wisconsin

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Broadband Plan for Southwest Region Launching October 5 *Participation by residents and leaders requested*

FENNIMORE-The Public Service Commission (PSC) announced an open house is being held on October 5th at Southwest Technical College. A team of Southwest Wisconsin community leaders are launching initiatives to fill in gaps in broadband availability and improve adoption of available broadband services.

The open house at Southwest Technical College will include findings on broadband needs, barriers to adoption, and maps showing gaps in service. Those at the meeting will have the opportunity to start advancing broadband projects.

“Please plan to come if you’re a broadband provider, a business or local leader, or a resident and you want to see affordable, dependable broadband available where people live and work in Grant, Crawford, Richland, Iowa and Lafayette Counties,” said Tom Jackson, Office of Senator Dale Schultz and a member of the regional planning team.

The meeting is set for Wednesday, October 5, from 4:00 to 6:30 in the Lenz Conference Center in SWTC’s main building, 1800 Bronson Blvd, Fennimore.

The planning team included representatives from education, health care, business, public safety and more. The team developed do-able projects to elicit public and private investment of time and money for more broadband adoption and infrastructure to deploy broadband to more rural areas. For example, projects include outreach to seniors and farmers with classes on computer and Internet basics.

The meeting will launch a “Partners for Broadband” (P4BB) group. BEST Wisconsin, an economic development corporation for the southwest region will lend its executive director, April Fuhr to the effort. “BEST Wisconsin has offered to help by providing the organizational capacity to ensure projects move forward,” said Fuhr. “BEST directors understand that broadband is an important tool to meet the region’s needs for healthcare, education, jobs, public safety, cost effective government services, community participation and much more.”

Members of the Team represent stakeholders for broadband and include internet service providers (ISP), health care, public safety, schools, libraries, seniors, non-profit groups, business and government.

Increasing affordable and reliable broadband is a necessity for the Southwest region. The following are quotes from community leaders about the importance of broadband to Southwest Wisconsin.

“In healthcare, broadband applications can enable people to remain living at home rather than having to live in an institution,” said Nicole Clapp CEO, Grant Regional Health Center. “Broadband applications can improve a person's quality of life in a very cost effective way.”

“The partnership can support classes’ specific to farmers,” said Derek Dachelet Southwest Wisconsin Technical College. “At Southwest Technical College, farmers often tell us they've benefitted financially after learning how to use resources on the internet. Farmers depend on all sorts of technical tools and broadband is one more technical tool. ”

“For emergency services, broadband can enable law enforcement, fire and ambulance workers to communicate between a control center and crisis scene which is critical in many situations,” said Sheriff Steve Michek. “Broadband efforts such as this may assist our day to day operations for mobile computers to dispatch center connections because we are always looking for faster connections that allow more data to be transferred.”

“Broadband is now an essential, like electricity and phone service,” said Ed White Economic Development Planner, SW Regional Planning Commission. “It’s vital to medical care in the home, public safety services, students, and to connect to government services. It enables seniors to access Medicare and Social Security; it can boost farm profits, and enables workers to be productive from home and remote locations.”

“WIconnect Wireless has built a rural high speed internet solution,” said Dave Bangert WIconnect Wireless. “We provide economic benefits to the communities we serve. We’ve overcome challenges that often prevent rural internet adoption.”

Presenters from the Wisconsin Public Service Commission, Link Wisconsin and the Regional Planning Team will stay after the meeting to talk with participants. Broadband maps are online at <http://wi.linkamericadata.org/> and the southwest region’s plan is online at www.link.wisconsin.gov or call April Fuhr at 608-558-0367. If you don’t have Internet at home, the plan can be reviewed by accessing the Internet at a library.

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