



NEWS RELEASE

DeKalb Advancement of Technology Authority

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Attention: Editor

DATA consortium to bring faster Internet to DeKalb County schools, businesses

DeKalb, Ill. — The average smart phone that many people carry in their pockets provides better, faster Internet service than is available at many schools in DeKalb County.

Friday, a consortium comprised of DeKalb County, Northern Illinois University and DeKalb Fiber Optic, working together under the banner of the DeKalb Advancement of Technology Authority, announced that they will be running fiber optic cables to every school in the county to deliver cutting edge Internet technology. Most schools will see their Internet speed increase 1,000 fold, and for most it will come at a lower price than their current service.

The consortium will use nearly \$12 million in federal grant money, as well as some state and local money for the project. The total investment will be about \$15 million.

“This has been a wonderful partnership,” said DeKalb County Board President Ruth Anne Tobias. “So many parties worked so hard to make it happen that it is very gratifying to see it come to fruition. We are very grateful to the U.S. Department of Commerce, to Gov. Quinn and the legislature, and to all of our local funders for making this possible.”

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The majority of the money (an \$11.8 million grant) comes from the economic stimulus bill passed last fall (the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act). The grant is administered by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, which is a branch of the U.S. Department of Commerce. That agency's Broadband Technology Opportunities Program is spending about \$4.7 billion to deploy broadband infrastructure into un-served or underserved areas of the country.

Another \$1.3 million is being provided by the State of Illinois, with DeKalb-based Internet service provider DeKalb Fiber Optic also contributing \$1.3 million in cash, services and materials. Other contributors include: NIU - \$150,000; Kishwaukee Community Hospital - \$100,000; and DeKalb County - \$75,000.

Once the fiber optic lines are connected, the only limitations that DeKalb County schools will face regarding Internet speed will be what technology is available and how much they are willing to spend to buy it.

Currently at many schools in DeKalb County, slow Internet connections prohibit creative teachers from accessing resources to teach their students. Teachers are sometimes told to stop using Internet video or educational services because doing so creates a bottleneck that prohibits anyone else from using the Internet.

The new fiber optic network also will allow DeKalb County schools to obtain speeds a thousand times faster with the ability to upgrade to even faster speeds as needed. It also will allow them to work together over an ultra-high speed network and share technical resources, video and educational services, and reducing costs.

Tobias said that improved broadband capacity has been a goal in the county for years.

"It is such an important part of today's economy and it just has not been widely available in the more rural parts of the county. Having this in place will create tremendous opportunities in many areas."

Among those likely to benefit are:

■ **Hospitals, clinics, physicians** – The new fiber optic lines will create affordable opportunities for health care providers to tap into broadband services and begin benefitting from the use of electronic medical records or even to consult in real time with specialists hundreds or thousands of miles away.

■ **Libraries** - Demand for Internet connectivity for libraries has risen exponentially over the past few years with more people using laptops and workstations while visiting. Libraries also are seeing an increase in the distribution and sharing of digital media putting more demands on slow Internet connections. Many libraries in DeKalb County have seen connectivity slow to a crawl. The new fiber optic network will allow libraries to upgrade to speeds that eliminate such delays.

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■ **Farmers** – Special provisions have been made that will allow farmers to connect to the lines, enabling them (through a cooperative sharing of services with the DeKalb County Farm Bureau) to transfer data from the farm to suppliers for analytical processing to help them obtain sufficient seed, fertilizer and other inputs to ensure optimal yields.

■ **Municipalities** – The new lines will provide a backbone infrastructure for municipalities to tap into a county-wide E-911 service, and to share resources that will allow for disaster planning and mitigation.

■ **Individual businesses** – Because the system will be built in partnership with private firms, fiber will be available for use by private businesses. This offers new opportunities for business to obtain broadband services at ultra high speeds at rates near or below what they are currently paying. This will help DeKalb County attract large businesses that increasingly consider high-speed broadband an essential utility.

■ **Private citizens** – The new fiber optic lines extend into communities where broadband service is unavailable. The privately owned portions of the line can be used by new or existing Internet service providers to make that service available to private homes.

“This changes the whole concept of what broadband means for this region,” said Dan Halverson, vice president of DeKalb Fiber Optic, explaining that the new fiber will be capable of speeds 100 to 1,000 times faster than available in the county now. “That will make DeKalb County much more competitive in the global economy, it will raise our profile and it will increase our tax base.”

NIU President John Peters shared the excitement over the educational and economic ramifications of the project.

“This collaboration is a proud moment for the university,” he said. “When we began building our own fiber optic network, NIUNet, just six years ago, something like this seemed a distant dream. Since then, our Information Technology Services group has built a name for itself finding creative, collaborative solutions that make projects like this possible. I couldn’t be more delighted today to see those efforts paying dividends in our own backyard. This is an example of NIU pointing to the future and thanks in part to this project, it is a very bright future indeed.”

Under the proposal, NIU will provide infrastructure design, network design and sustainability for the DATA network; DeKalb Fiber Optics LLC will maintain the fiber cable and provide services over the fiber infrastructure; those activities will be carried out under an agreement with DeKalb County, which will administer the project.

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See list of benefactors on next page

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— more —

DATA will bring broadband to:

42 K-12 Schools

(Most DeKalb and Sycamore schools
are already connected)

12 Municipalities

20 County Sites (including E-911 services)

2 Hospitals

5 Clinics

68 Library Locations

Kishwaukee College

Northern Illinois University

More than 3,600 Businesses (potentially)

82,500 County Residents (potentially)