

Nixon announces \$49.1 million to expand broadband in state

Governor Jay Nixon last week provided details about \$49.1 million in federal funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture awarded on Aug. 4 to three Missouri businesses to bring broadband access to schools, businesses, health care providers and consumers in parts of central, southeast and southwest Missouri.



GOV. JAY NIXON

"One area I know this will make a difference in is health care," Nixon said. "Using the Internet in operating rooms, you can literally look inside someone's heart half a continent away."

The State of Missouri is partnering with the three businesses, Big River Telephone Co., Finally Broadband and Socket Telecom, in MoBroadbandNow, an initiative created by Nixon last year to dramatically expand the reach of broadband across Missouri.

"Just as the railroads and interstates transformed Missouri communities in decades past, these projects will help connect many more areas of Missouri with the information superhighway of the future," Nixon said. "They have the potential to connect doctors and patients at the speed of light; open doors of our colleges and universities to more students; and expand markets for small businesses to not only the rest of the state, but to markets across the globe."

Big River will use \$24.4 million (\$12.2 million in grants and \$12.2 million in

loans) to create a broadband network reaching 90 percent of the homes in their service area, which includes Bollinger, Cape Girardeau, Madison, Perry, St. Francois, Ste. Genevieve and Washington counties.

"This will be literally transformative for those counties," Nixon said.

An application was submitted to enter the competition for Round 2 funding from USDA's Rural Utilities Service (RUS). Nixon has taken a number of steps to underscore the scope and potential of the MoBroadbandNow applications, including personal conversations with U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and U.S. Commerce Secretary Gary Locke.

"Without the vision and commitment of these partners with the state of Missouri, broadband service would not be brought to these parts of the state for many years, if ever," Nixon said. "These partnerships will serve as models for delivering this high-speed connection directly to Missourians in areas that have little or no broadband access. These awards are helping us make MoBroadbandNow a reality and close the divide between communities with broadband access and those without."

The MoBroadbandNow initiative was created by Nixon to coordinate the state's efforts to expand broadband in Missouri in response to the federal recovery act passed last year. Its

primary goal was to dramatically expand the reach of high-speed Internet throughout Missouri with a focus of ensuring that the state of Missouri competed aggressively for every broadband dollar included in the federal recovery legislation.

MoBroadbandNow has supported both middle-mile and last-mile projects to bring a high-speed broadband connection into currently underserved or unserved communities. As part of the successful Big River application, Missouri pledged \$150,000 in matching funds to help bring broadband to the region. The state matching funds for this project will come from the federal budget stabilization fund, approved by the Missouri legislature for broadband enhancement projects.

"I want to thank Governor Nixon for his strong leadership to expand broadband in Missouri," said Kevin Cantwell, president of Big River Telephone Company. "We truly had a terrific partnership of Big River and the MoBroadbandNow team led by OA Commissioner Kelvin Simmons. We can't wait to get started to bring broadband, economic development and jobs to southeast Missouri."

Big River will be providing high-speed Internet access (both fixed and mobile) at download speeds up to 14.4 Mbps and upload speeds of 5.8 Mbps. The company also will be deploying a wireless broadband network that will support high-speed connectivity to the Internet for data, voice and video applications, for both mobile and fixed locations.

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