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News

Stimulus funds will expand broadband service

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A \$2.28 million federal stimulus grant will bring broadband Internet service to more than 3,000 Pickaway County residents who currently do not have access, according to Chris Cooper, managing partner of Intelliwave.

The company, based in Athens, is one of three companies that received a portion of nearly \$10 million in stimulus money through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to provide affordable wireless broadband and VoIP phone service to unserved or underserved rural Ohio communities.

Intelliwave's portion, a \$1,162,599 loan and \$1,116,997 grant, will be used to expand the broadband network to more than 11,000 households and businesses in Athens, Fairfield and Pickaway counties, Cooper said.

"Right now, we've been doing a lot of work around Circleville and in the eastern portion of Pickaway County," Cooper said. "We will be not only expanding that network but also heading into the western and northern portions of the county."

While the program rules stipulate the project must be completed within 36 months, Cooper said Intelliwave is poised to deliver the service within the next 18 months, around the fall of 2011.

"We're still finalizing everything and need to sign some documents, which should happen within the next month," he said. "But with the stimulus program, they really wanted to see an immediate bang for their buck, and applications that were shovel-ready rose to the top of the heap. As soon as they give us the funding, we're ready to build. I think that's one reason our application was successful."

Cooper said residents and businesses can expect introductory level service to begin at about \$34.95 per month, a 30 percent decrease from the company's normal monthly fees for broadband access.

"This award represents true economic stimulus for the region," Cooper said. "Not only will Intelliwave offer high quality technical job opportunities for residents here, we will also expand economic opportunities within the communities that will now have access to lower cost, higher speed Internet service."

Cooper said the company expects to hire at least seven new employees to complete the expansion process.

Nate Green, director of the Pickaway Progress Partnership (P3), said businesses will benefit as much from the extended broadband capabilities as the average county resident or student who cannot currently complete homework at home without reliable Internet service.

"There are a lot of businesses out there scattered throughout Pickaway County who will have a new opportunity to expand and grow once this is completed," Green said. "You never know what they'll be able to do through the Internet or how they can improve customer service by having that ability."

More information on Intelliwave and its services can be found at www.intelliwave.com.

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