

The Commonwealth "Middle Mile" Broadband Infrastructure Project

Fact Sheet

The Commonwealth received a **\$28.8 million ARRA grant** for the deployment of middle mile broadband infrastructure in northern Pennsylvania. The funding agency is the federal Department of Commerce, National Telecommunications Information Administration (NTIA) and the grant is part of the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP). The grant will be administered by the **Governor's Office of Administration**.

PROJECT OVERVIEW: The Commonwealth's middle mile broadband project builds upon physical infrastructure of the state's public safety microwave network. The grant will allow the Commonwealth to add excess network capacity to the network. Local telecommunications companies and internet service providers will be able to purchase the excess capacity at a competitive price point to serve citizens, schools and businesses in the area. The 32 county region covered by the project is currently unserved or underserved by commercial broadband providers due to distance, topography and/or lack of population density.

COVERAGE AREA: The potential coverage area is an east-west corridor between I-80 and the Pennsylvania-New York State border. The project will benefit the following **32 counties**: Bradford, Cameron, Carbon, Centre, Clarion, Clearfield, Clinton, Columbia, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest, Jefferson, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Lycoming, McKean, Mercer, Monroe, Montour, Northumberland, Pike, Potter, Snyder, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Tioga, Union, Venango, Warren, Wayne, Wyoming

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROVIDERS:

- 1. Excess bandwidth capacity:** The Commonwealth will add an additional **150 Mbps** of excess bandwidth capacity to its existing 50 Mbps system and will make it available to providers that serve customers and anchor institutions (schools, colleges, hospitals, libraries, public safety entities) in the project area.
- 2. Backhaul capacity:** The Commonwealth will be able to provide **broadband transport (backhaul)** from point to point for last mile providers. This opportunity can benefit businesses with applications that involve record sharing, diagnostic image sharing and remote patient consultations between a patient's home, health care facilities and clinics.
- 3. Tower collocation:** The Commonwealth owns almost 150 towers throughout the state with many located in the northern tier. We are encouraging last mile providers to **collocate equipment** on the towers to increase their coverage area. The goal is to have as many on and off ramps as possible to the enhanced network to keep the number of transfers between providers and customers to a minimum and to accommodate more traffic on the network overall.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

I am a broadband provider and I am interested in collocation opportunities on the state network and/or provision of backhaul capacity. What is the next step?

You should contact the Commonwealth at the address listed below. We are collecting the contact information of entities interested in collaborating so that we can be sure to get you additional information as it becomes available.

Can citizens, communities or anchor institutions purchase services directly from the Commonwealth?

No, the Commonwealth does not intend to provide services directly to the end user. Rather, the Commonwealth will provide opportunities to telecommunications companies or to internet service providers that can deliver the service to you. If you are currently unable to receive connectivity or affordable services, you may want to ask your provider to contact the Commonwealth to inquire about potential opportunities.

Will funds be distributed to communities or to providers under this grant?

No, the grant funds will be used to enable the Commonwealth to enhance the network and expand connectivity. The funds will be used by the Commonwealth for this purpose. This project would not be able to proceed without the ARRA grant.

How will the Commonwealth be selecting a vendor? Will the Commonwealth be issuing a procurement?

To be successful, NTIA required applicants to demonstrate that operational and implementation aspects of project proposals had been settled. This goes directly to the ARRA's insistence that projects be 'shovel ready'. The Commonwealth intends to use contracts with vendors which were bid competitively.

How does this Middle Mile project relate to Chapter 30?

Act 183 of 2004, also referred to as "Chapter 30", is a state law that creates programs and mechanisms through which consumers can request accelerated broadband service delivery through their local telephone company. This Middle Mile project is not covered by Chapter 30 but it will build upon it since the Commonwealth's project will help accelerate broadband deployment to rural communities, particularly those in northern Pennsylvania. For more information on the Chapter 30 programs, please contact the Department of Community & Economic Development or its broadband website: www.broadbandinpa.com

For more information about the project, please contact Luc M. Miron, Office of Administration/Office for Information Technology, 717.705.5462, or lmiron@state.pa.us.