

LaSalle County Broadband Initiative

301 West Madison Street
Ottawa, Illinois 61350
815-433-0161

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Contact: Reed Wilson
815-433-0161, ext. 21

LCBI Receives Major State Grant

Nearly \$4 million awarded to help LCBI Meet Federal Match

The LaSalle County Broadband Initiative (LCBI) was given a major boost today when the State of Illinois, in a statement made by Governor Quinn in Chicago, announced the LCBI has been awarded nearly \$4 million in State funding (drawn from State capitol development funds) to assist it in meeting the non-federal match required by federal application rules.

The LCBI is seeking nearly \$20 million in state and federal funding to build a 190 mile fiber optic network throughout LaSalle County. The network and its access to unrestricted, high speed broadband at competitive prices will provide economic development and new job creation opportunities while strengthening education, public safety, health care and the general quality of life throughout LaSalle County.

The federal funds are being sought through the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) under the auspices of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). The grant rules require the applicant to raise 20-30% of the project budget as a non-federal match. Given the intense national competition, however, the upper level of the matching percentage realistically needs to be met in order to file a truly competitive grant application.

With this assistance from the State of Illinois combined with the in-kind and cash pledge contributions received, the LCBI will be able to file an application which features a non-federal pledge level of more than 31%.

The LCBI effort is being led locally by the City of Ottawa and the North Central Illinois Council of Governments which has provided critically important grant application development expertise.

For the purpose of filing a larger and thus stronger grant application, the State of Illinois has combined the LCBI with two other regional broadband projects from northwest Illinois and the Rockford area. This regional approach has been strongly endorsed by Northern Illinois University which will actually file the grant application in the immediate future and then administer the grant funds should the application be approved. This regional approach will not affect the LCBI operations in LaSalle County. Grant award notification will not be announced until late summer at the earliest.

