



Latah County
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MOSCOW, ID—April 14, 2023—The Latah County Broadband Coalition is preparing a multi-million-dollar grant application to address internet infrastructure and availability throughout the County. To further demonstrate the need and support for improving broadband in Latah County, we are requesting additional community input.

The Coalition aims to build a dark fiber network along identified major gaps where there is no fiber optic cable infrastructure. This involves constructing conduit pathways along public rights-of-way filled with multiple strands of fiber optic cables. These pathways – much like highways and roads – would form the baseline infrastructure needed to enable private providers to serve last-mile locations at speeds that exceed what’s available today. The proposed plan would connect wireless towers with fiber as well as make direct fiber connections to community anchor institutions, like city halls and libraries, and to communities that are population-dense enough to make builds feasible and justifiable, including incorporated cities. Not unlike transportation infrastructure, these digital highways will allow commerce, education, healthcare, public safety, and communities to move at 21st century speeds.

“Building this infrastructure is not only a necessity for modern-day public safety, education, and healthcare but it will also set Latah County apart from others in the region when it comes to economic development and quality of life,” said Latah County Commissioner Tom Lamar.

Close to \$1 billion will be distributed by the state over the next two years for broadband. The Idaho Broadband Advisory Board and the Idaho Department of Commerce are responsible for administering grant funds through the American Rescue Plan Act’s Capital Projects Fund and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act’s Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment program.

In preparation for this funding, the Latah County Broadband Coalition has been meeting for over a year and a half to engage stakeholders across the County, communicate broadband needs, and offer support in developing projects to address those needs. In January 2022, the Coalition set out to outline a roadmap for broadband infrastructure builds that will enable new minimum speeds of 100/20 and 100/100 Mbps for households and 1/1 Gbps for schools and other anchor institutions. Because Latah County is 98% rural by geography and 32% rural by population, reaching the 12,660 residents who live outside the City of Moscow is exceptionally difficult. Rural Latah County consists of 1,070 square miles of expansive, topographically diverse terrain with schools, cities, businesses, and households spread out all across it. As such, the Coalition believes that connecting the entire County will take a hybrid, collaborative approach that’s a true public-private partnership.

“Our students, faculty, and staff live all throughout Latah County. Broadband is a recruitment tool, a retention tool, a driver in economic development and a critical component in improving life in our County. Education and research are no longer placed-based activities – we use all of Latah County for our homes, our classrooms, and our laboratories,” said Dan Ewart, Vice President for Information Technology and Chief Information Officer at the University of Idaho. “To be competitive in drawing the best and brightest to our County and to support growth and change in the future, we need fast, robust, redundant, and scalable broadband – which the proposed project will provide.”

With the help of local providers and other valued partners, Latah County is prepared to apply for these upcoming grants to fund a multi-phased, multi-million-dollar broadband expansion project. In addition to project planning, the Coalition has launched a website, a speed test campaign, and an effort to communicate about the Affordable Connectivity Program.

Community members interested in providing support or feedback should visit our website: grants.latahcountyid.gov.

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ABOUT

The [Latah County Broadband Coalition](#) engages stakeholders across the County to communicate broadband needs and offer support in developing projects to address those needs. The Coalition's aim is to find local, state, and federal funding to facilitate the build-out of future-proof broadband infrastructure throughout Latah County.

Members of the Latah County Broadband Coalition include:

- City of Potlatch, City of Bovill, City of Genesee, City of Kendrick, City of Juliaetta, City of Deary, City of Troy, City of Moscow, Latah County Library District, Moscow School District, Kendrick Joint School District, Genesee Joint School District, Potlatch School District, Troy School District, University of Idaho, Gritman Medical Center, Highway District, Latah County

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