



Media Contact: Jessica Ditto
jditto@connectednation.org
(202) 251-4749

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Wil Payton
wpayton@connectednation.org
(202) 256-6516

Antrim County: Certified In The Connected Community Program

Technology Assessment Results Announced

Bellaire, MI – Antrim County has become a certified community under Connected Nation’s Connected Community Engagement Program. Robin Ancona, director, Telecommunications Division, Michigan Public Service Commission, joined the Antrim County Community Engagement Team and Connect Michigan today at an event held at the Antrim County Building in Bellaire where the results from a community technology assessment and strategies for broadband expansion were unveiled.



“With this certification, Antrim County has proven it is ready to take the next steps to become better connected,” said John Quackenbush, chairman, Michigan Public Service Commission. “The result of their efforts is a concrete technology action plan that contains specific recommendations.”

The Antrim County Technology Action Plan contains specific recommendations of projects to expand digital literacy, build awareness of the benefits of

broadband, assist businesses with websites and social media, and improve the online presence of local governments, among others. Achieving Connected certification affords a community an avenue to discuss its success and pursue opportunities as a recognized, technologically advanced community.

Three priority projects were identified in the plan including: expanding fiber access between local governments, developing a technology project center, and creating a teleworker support program.

“In this day and age, high-speed Internet is absolutely critical. It is no longer a luxury and it is essential for any kind of business growth,” said Andy Hayes, president of the Northern Lakes Economic Alliance. “No one can grow a business and no one will locate a business that depends on high-speed Internet access to an area without this vital utility. Working with organizations that can help us build that critical mass is essential to our economic development strategy.”

The Connected Community Engagement Program, facilitated by Connect Michigan, supports the development of a comprehensive strategy for building a “connected” community by reviewing the technology landscape, developing regional partnerships, establishing local teams, and conducting a thorough community assessment of broadband access, adoption, and use.

Other Michigan communities and organizations working to gain certification through this program include the Eastern Upper Peninsula Regional Planning and Development Commission; the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission; and the counties of Barry, Clare, Delta, Gladwin, Livingston, Marquette, Mecosta, Osceola, Oscoda, St. Clair, and Wexford.

Last summer, Charlevoix County became the first Connected certified community in the nation.

“While it is fantastic that Antrim County is now certified as a ‘connected community’ I don’t see this as the ultimate goal,” said Peter Garwood, administrator, Antrim County. “I believe the greatest benefit of the new plan is that we now have a good idea of the areas of weakness in our broadband

coverage - now it is time for all of us to continue to work together to fill those gaps to the best of our ability.”

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About Connect Michigan: As the designated entity for broadband mapping and planning in the state of Michigan, Connect Michigan is a public-private partnership between the Michigan Public Service Commission and Connected Nation to work with local governments, businesses, and citizens in the goal of increasing broadband service in the state’s underserved areas. For more information about what Connect Michigan is doing to accelerate technology in Michigan’s communities, visit www.connectmi.org.

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Community Engagement Program

Connected Nation developed the Connected Community Engagement Program to help guide a community through an assessment of its overall broadband and technology status. Connected certified communities have measurably demonstrated their proficiency for effective Access, Adoption, and Use of broadband-supported technologies. Connected Nation through its partners provides a national platform for recognizing those communities that excel across these important benchmarks. Funded by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), this effort is part of the State Broadband Initiative.

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