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Eastern UP Team Joins the Connected Community Program

Group is working to develop a plan for building a twenty-first century broadband infrastructure

Sault Ste. Marie, MI – The Eastern Upper Peninsula Community Planning Team (EUPCPT) has joined forces with Connect Michigan by enrolling in the Connected community certification program, an initiative that offers a comprehensive way to bridge the digital divide impacting many communities including Chippewa, Luce, and Mackinac counties.

With a tradition of working together and sharing resources, the region's leaders have joined together to form this team to facilitate the expansion of broadband technology and increased usage by the region's residents. Twelve individuals representing the collaborating communities attended the initial kick-off meeting in May.

For the past 3-4 years, broadband has been within the top 5 ranking priority projects in the Eastern UP Region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies.

"Broadband availability, accessibility, and affordability are the lifeblood of almost any small- to medium-sized enterprise, particularly in rural areas," said Jeff Hagan, executive director of the Eastern Upper Peninsula Regional Planning and Development Commission and one of the leaders of the EUPCPT. "The Eastern UP Region contains many 'black holes' where services are not available and even more where services are only partially available. This has a tremendous impact on development in local communities and the potential for development even in our more populated places."

The Connected certification program entails building a comprehensive action plan for developing a technology-ready community by reviewing the technology landscape,

developing regional partnerships, establishing local teams, and conducting a thorough community assessment.

Ken Miller is director of the Bayliss Regional Library and is also assisting in leading the EUPCPT.

“Here at Bayliss Public Library we are working a 1,726 square mile district library covering most of the eastern UP,” said Miller. “It is imperative that fast, reliable Internet service be available to ensure that commercial, educational, recreational, and cultural services are delivered in a efficient an equitable way. This project will help bring precious connectivity to this large area.”

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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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