



Connect Michigan, Library of Michigan Host Statewide Conference Focused on Economic, Social Impact of Broadband

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

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

*Hundreds turn out for in-depth discussion on best practices,
strategic planning for broadband expansion across state*

[Watch the Livestream Recording](#)
[Access the Agenda & Presentations](#)

Lansing, MI – The 2013 Michigan Broadband Conference at the Kellogg Center at Michigan State University in Lansing drew more than 300 attendees and another 150 via Livestream yesterday. The statewide broadband technology conference was co-hosted by Connect Michigan and the Library of Michigan to share best practices for community planning and raise awareness of broadband's economic growth potential.

“Broadband Internet access and adoption is fundamental for revitalizing Michigan’s economy and for enhancing the quality of life for its residents,” said Eric Frederick, Connect Michigan’s executive director. “We are excited to be working with the Library of Michigan, and the United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development, and several regional sponsors to bring together nationally recognized broadband and technology experts with local leaders to provide attendees with best practices and insights into leveraging this transformative technology.”

From township officials to representatives from the Michigan Department of Agriculture, and from representatives of three Native American tribes to the major technology providers that could potentially serve them, the level of audience diversity was indicative of the need and desire to leverage technology to enhance and sustain the economic standing and quality of life aspects of Michigan communities.

The agenda featured state and national leaders such as Michigan Lieutenant Governor Brian Calley; Michael Finney, president and CEO of the Michigan Economic Development Corporation; Blair Levin, Aspen Institute Fellow and chief architect of the National Broadband Plan; Dr. Johannes Bauer, Michigan State University; Steven Webster, Prima Civitas; author Howard Rheingold; Tom Ferree, Connected Nation; John Summersett, COMLINK, LLC; Ron Mellon, USDA – Rural Utilities Service; and Jim Turner, USDA – Rural Development.

The economic growth the state could realize through increased broadband adoption in homes and businesses was a key theme of the day.

“Our number one focus is creating more jobs in Michigan. If we can get a 12,000 jobs impact by just getting more adopters in our state to connect to broadband, that's creating jobs the easy way,” said Finney during the afternoon economic panel.

To recognize the outstanding contributions individuals and organizations have made to increase broadband service in the state, Connect Michigan created the **Michigan Broadband Hero Award**.

Broadband Access Hero awards were presented to:

- Frontier Communications
- Bloomingdale Communications
- miSpot
- Clare County Broadband Network Group

Broadband Adoption Hero awards were presented to:

- Sheryl Mase, Library of Michigan
- Allison Arnold, St. Clair County Library System
- Jan Kellogg, Northern Lakes Economic Alliance

Broadband Use Hero awards were presented to:

- Harbor Springs Public Schools one-to-one device program
- St. Clair County Office of Emergency Management Resilient Project

The conference was made possible by the generous support of the following sponsors: Library of Michigan, Frontier, Comlink, USDA, Farm Bureau, Century Link, Clark Hill, PLC, ComCast, Prima Civitas, LocaLoop, Inc., Mobile Technology Association of Michigan, Community Economic Development

Association of Michigan, GeLo, Redevelopment Ready Communities Program, and the Michigan Public Service Commission.

Communities interested in doing more about broadband can get involved through Connect Michigan. Connect Michigan's parent organization, Connected Nation, recently launched a campaign to help communities grow "Beyond the Divide" through the [Connected Community Engagement Program](#). Last year, Michigan was the first state to certify a Connected community under the program. This program supports the development of a comprehensive strategy for building a "connected" community by establishing a local cross-sector technology planning team, conducting a thorough assessment of local technology assets and broadband access, adoption, and use, and developing a community technology action plan that identifies a strategy for pursuing solutions and partnerships needed to empower the local vision for a broadband-enabled future.

There are 27 Michigan communities engaged in the program supported by Connect Michigan's technology advisors. Nineteen of those communities have released technology action plans that involve increasing broadband access in underserved areas, some of the country's first district-wide 1:1 device initiatives in schools, and website support for small businesses. To learn more about this program download the latest progress [report](#).

Connect Michigan is a statewide non-profit working with public and private partners to expand broadband access, adoption, and use in communities. The initiative is in partnership with the Michigan Public Service Commission and funded in part by the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration State Broadband Initiative grant program.

Visit www.connectmi.org to see all the photos, videos, and presentation highlights from the broadband conference.

Photo: The 2013 Michigan Broadband Conference Thursday in Lansing featured a well-attended economic development and broadband panel featuring Tom Ferree, Connected Nation, as moderator and panelists (from left) Blair Levin, Aspen Institute; Mike Finney, Michigan Economic Development Corporation; Dr. Johannes Bauer, Michigan State University; and Steve Webster, Prima Civitas.

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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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