

The Dickson Herald

Broadband research entity working with county receives \$1.3M grant

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A national program to provide more broadband access to rural communities recently gave Tennessee a \$1.8 million grant to enhance connectivity.

The Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration awarded a total of 15 grants to states nationwide to fund broadband mapping and planning activities.

The program, funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, will increase broadband access and adoption through better data collection and broadband planning, according to a Commerce Department press release.

Connected Tennessee, the designated entity for the state of Tennessee, received \$1.3 million for broadband data collection and mapping activities over a two-year period and almost \$500,000 for broadband planning activities over a five-year period in Tennessee, bringing the total grant award to \$1.8 million.

Dickson County leaders met with Connected Tennessee representatives in October. County Mayor Robert Stone said the project remains a top priority for him, as he sees it playing a big role in the county in the future.

"We're making progress here," Stone said. "I can't give you a timeframe when we'll succeed with this but we are working on it, and it's pretty high on my list of priorities right now."

Stone said two vendors have expressed interest in providing the infrastructure across Dickson County to ensure broadband is available to most residents.

Chamber of Commerce President David Hamilton said the final result would be a huge increase over the "spotty" broadband options currently available to residents of rural areas.

The Connected Dickson County Strategic Technology Plan identifies the top priorities for the next two years: Implement a county technology awareness program and complete county technology asset inventory.

Connected Tennessee will collect and verify the availability, speed, and location of broadband statewide. This activity is to be conducted on a semi-annual basis between 2009 and 2011, with the data to be presented in a clear and accessible format to the public, government, and the research community. Connected Tennessee is required to contribute at least 20 percent non-federal matching funds toward project costs.

NTIA received applications representing all 50 states, five territories and the District of Columbia to participate in the program. Twenty-one grants have previously been announced under this program.

For more information about the NTIA, visit www.ntia.doc.gov.