



BCDA News

BEDFORD COUNTY DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION

Bedford County Internet to Increase Speed State Technology Grant to aid county deployment

Harry Zimble

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State Senator Robert C. Jubelirer announced that the Bedford County Development Association (BCDA) has been approved for a \$100,000 state grant to bring broad-band technology to a large portion of Bedford County. The grant will be used to install new equipment on a series of towers that will provide faster internet speeds through wireless technology. Mountain Top Technologies (MTT) will provide the remaining funding for the \$281,000 project.

"Modern communications is increasingly becoming the make or break issue for economic development. With the rapid growth of technology comes the need to quickly send and receive large quantities of information. This grant will help speed the technology coming to Bedford County," Jubelirer said.

According to BCDA President Bette Slayton, this service will be a tremendous boost to small businesses. "Although fast internet service is available in some areas through telephone lines, the cost can be unaffordable for many small businesses and other enterprises. This project should reduce the cost and increase access."

Jubelirer added that rural areas have been historically underserved by traditional providers since there is not enough population to make up for the high cost of deployment. "State officials are realizing that a technology gap exists between urban and rural communities, and that there is an urgency to putting a solution in place. The availability of modern communications will create new opportunities for residents, businesses, health care providers, and education providers in Bedford County."

"Fast deployment of this technology will support our existing businesses and will help us market Bedford County to prospective employers," Slayton added.

MTT plans to begin deployment immediately and hopes to have service available by November, 2004. Initial plans call for service to be available to 19,000 households and 825 businesses.

BCDA Chair, Robert Octavio said the effort by MTT, who has a proven track record in providing wireless internet services and can deploy rapidly, is encouraging. "We believe it is important to continue the momentum built up by the CANA study and to get this technology out there as soon as possible."

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