

Susan Bell

Commissioner

P.O. Box 110800

Juneau, AK 99811-0800

www.commerce.alaska.gov

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE,
COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mark Kelsey

*Communications
Coordinator*

907.269.7387

mark.kelsey@alaska.gov

Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Statewide broadband task force named

Juneau, Alaska – Commissioner Susan Bell today announced the formation of a statewide broadband task force to work with the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development (DCCED) on a plan to accelerate the deployment and availability of affordable broadband technology throughout the state.

The 20-person task force will look at how Alaska should expand high-speed Internet to everyone across Alaska, the policies that should be in place to encourage broadband development as well as to plan for a broadband summit in 2012. Commissioner Bell said the task force members, who were nominated by their respective organizations, are individuals who understand the challenges of broadband deployment across Alaska and who have specific knowledge of communications systems, their normative uses and the technology that supports them.

“These are people who are willing to work cooperatively and together toward the best benefit of the State of Alaska, and they will be a big part of our effort to radically improve the lives of rural residents and remote towns,” Commissioner Bell said. “The administration is working to develop greater opportunities, and a new thoroughway to economic empowerment, a valuable lifeline to the outside world and all the opportunity that brings.”

DCCED oversees the Connect Alaska program, a subsidiary of the national nonprofit Connected Nation, the designated entity developing a statewide broadband inventory map and the Alaska broadband plan. Funding for Connect Alaska and the broadband initiative are part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 and is administered by the National Telecommunications and Information Agency (NTIA).

The program's first priority was to map the state's broadband inventory, and that map was made public last September. It can be found at www.connectak.org. Last week, NTIA unveiled the national broadband map, to which Connect Alaska contributed the data of 21 broadband service providers and 2,031 community anchor institutions.

In all, the national map (www.broadbandmap.gov) features 25 million searchable records and data from 1,600 unique broadband internet services providers, all collected by the states. It displays the geographic areas where broadband service is available; the technology used to provide the service; the speeds of the service; and, the broadband internet service available at anchor institutions.

Commissioner Bell said the launch of the national broadband map is a key milestone in the overall plan to develop targeted state and local broadband policies and programs. "I'm proud of the role that our partners and DCCED have played in creating such a powerful tool that will benefit consumers and businesses nationwide," she said. "And, I'm looking forward to involving as many pertinent stakeholders on the task force as possible."

The task force will convene for its first meeting before the end of March, and will meet monthly to begin the development of a broadband plan, with recommendations to be forwarded to the Governor's Office. The task force also will begin planning the statewide broadband summit, which will take place in 2012.

List of Task Force Members and the Organizations They Represent:

Providers & Suppliers:

Maureen Moore / GCI
Mike Todd / ACS
Chris Brown / AT&T
David Goggins / Alaska Telephone Association
Larry Bell / IBEW 1547

Community Anchors & User Groups:

Stevi Morton / Alaska State Hospital and Nursing Home Association
Robert Whicker / Alaska Association of School Boards
Steve Smith / University of Alaska
Mike Robinson / Alaska Library Association
Bill Popp / Alaska Partnership for Economic Development
Jeff Tucker / Alaska Municipal League
Mike Baker / Alaska Pacific University
Myron Naneng / Alaska Federation of Natives
Joseph Davis / Member-at-large

Regulators & Policy Makers:

Rep. Bob Herron / Alaska House of Representatives
Senator Joe Paskvan / Alaska State Senate
Rich Gazaway / Regulatory Commission of Alaska
Jim Kohler / Alaska State Department of Administration
John Boucher / Office of the Governor
Roberta Graham / Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development

About Connect Alaska

The Connect Alaska initiative was initially funded through a \$1.9 million grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) State Broadband Data and Development grant program to develop a state broadband map and conduct planning efforts over a five-year period. These funds are part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. An additional \$4.5 million federal grant was awarded last year to fund an additional initiative aimed at overcoming the state's unique barriers to widespread high-speed Internet service. The grant will fund the development of a new broadband plan to assess current broadband services and detail how the state might expand high-speed Internet.

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