



NEWS RELEASE



United States Department of Agriculture • Rural Development
William L. Guy Federal Building • 220 East Rosser Ave. • Room 208 • Bismarck, ND 58502
Phone: (701) 530-2037 • Fax: (701) 530-2111 • TDD: (701) 530-2113 • Web: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/>

Contact:
Samantha Evenson 701-425-4846

SENATOR CONRAD AND USDA ANNOUNCE BROADBAND PROJECTS

Consolidated Telcom and SRT Communications receive Recovery Act funds

DICKINSON, August 25, 2010 – USDA Rural Development State Director Jasper Schneider, U.S. Senator Kent Conrad, USDA Rural Utilities Service Administrator Jonathan Adelstein and Consolidated Telcom and SRT Communications board members gathered to announce projects expanding broadband services in rural North Dakota.

"These projects will provide broadband to thousands of North Dakotans. It will spark economic development, increase learning opportunities and connect more North Dakotans to the wide array of resources available online," said Senator Conrad.

Consolidated Telcom and SRT Communications were awarded more than \$15.9 million through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (Recovery Act) to expand broadband access in rural North Dakota. Today, there are many areas in rural America that do not have adequate access to Broadband. Investments in high-speed Internet infrastructure will help bridge the technological divide so rural communities have all the tools they need to thrive and compete in this digital age. The projects announced today are funded through USDA Rural Development's Broadband Initiatives Program (BIP) established under the Recovery Act. The program administers grants and loans for the deployment and construction of broadband systems with the intent to increase broadband services, create jobs and stimulate economic growth in rural areas.

"Broadband infrastructure is critical to enable innovation, economic competitiveness and provide the ability to communicate without boundaries," said Schneider. "The technology will help rural communities build prosperous economies for the 21st Century, making it more attractive to live and work in all parts of North Dakota."

Consolidated Telcom

Consolidated Telcom received a total of \$11,564,722 leveraged through a \$5,782,361 loan and matching grant. The funds will expand Fiber-to-the-Home (FTTH) access using the cooperative's existing fixed wireless data system. The project will bring broadband services to the least populated areas in Dickinson and Belfield where it has been cost prohibitive to deploy FTTH. Currently, residents only have access to dial-up Internet at slower speeds of 4 Mbps (mega bytes per second). When construction is complete, the cooperative will have built its facilities out to 1,421 households and will be able to provide voice and video, as well as data services up to 100 Mbps. Since 1961, Consolidated Telcom has provided communications, entertainment and information services to over 20,000 customers in southwestern North Dakota.

SRT Communications

SRT Communications, Inc will receive a total of \$4,429,516 leveraged through a \$2,214,758 loan and matching grant. The Fiber-to-the-Premise (FTTP) project will provide broadband services to the rural community of Metigoshe. Using fiber optic cable, SRT will provide more than 20 Mbps in broadband access to each of the 665 households and businesses, simultaneously. As North Dakota's largest telephone cooperative, SRT employs over 200 people and serves approximately 50,000 telephone customers in north central North Dakota.

Further information on rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office or by visiting USDA Rural Development's web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>.

Committed to the future of rural communities.

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