



## **Logan An Option For Launch Of Rural Broadband**

City Could Be Chosen For Internet Pilot Program

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A state program to bridge Ohio's digital divide may choose Logan as one of two places to launch a pilot program that will show how broadband Internet will work in rural areas.

"The state of Ohio is bound and determined to provide business class broadband to all of its public entities," Brent Runge, director of operations at Hocking County 911 and FastOhio member, said.

FastOhio, a corporation trying to bring broadband opportunities for communities in Hocking, Perry and Vinton counties, discussed the opportunity in their meeting Tuesday morning.

The state is looking to place two points of presence (POP), or access points to the Internet, in an urban and suburban area, possibly in Lancaster and Logan. This will allow the areas to test broadband opportunities and coverage range.

The strategy involves a partnership between the state and broadband providers to create detailed maps of broadband coverage in order to accurately pinpoint remaining gaps in broadband availability in Ohio; the pilot program can help them create these maps.

The state can work with private providers and community partners, such as FastOhio, to develop customized plans for broadband service in their areas.

In order to get a POP in Logan, FastOhio will need to build a fiber-optic cable connection with one gigabit bandwidth from a service provider in Logan to the Logan-Hocking Industrial park on Chieftain Drive.

The cable will connect to buildings in the industrial park, such as Hocking College's Energy Institute.

From the industrial park site in Hocking County, broadband signals can be broadcast by WiMAX microwaves to an existing Ohio Multi-Agency Radio Communications System, or MARCS tower, in Calico Ridge. Then the signal will go on to other MARCS towers in Perry and Vinton counties.

Each county would have the ability to distribute broadband through FastOhio to private Internet service providers and public agencies.

“We are in the business to distribute affordable bandwidth to everyone,” Runge said.

The price of the fiber-optic cable from Logan to the industrial park could cost approximately \$6,000 per mile. If the state chooses Logan for its pilot program, they may help by funding all or a portion of the cost.

While the state is still in the organizational process of the program, FastOhio will have time to finalize plans. The corporation will revise bylaws and establish a new board of directors.

Members of FastOhio reviewed revisions during the meeting and will make changes before they meet again; that date has not been set.

Each county has to appoint six members to the board of directors, one representative from education, public safety, health care, local government, economic development and one at-large representative. These appointees must be approved by the counties' commissioners.

Other items on the FastOhio to-do list include talking to local Internet service providers to generate interest in the program and to come up with a list of estimated expenses for the corporation, one with and without government funding.