



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
City of Duluth Communications Office

411 West First Street, Duluth, Minnesota 55802
218-730-5230 | www.duluthmn.gov | Don Ness, Mayor

For more information contact Pakou Ly, Public Information Coordinator 218-730-5309
or Amy Norris, Public Information Coordinator 218-730-4312

DATE: 09/02/2010

SUBJECT: Three New Fiber Lines into Duluth – Connections will enhance speed and reliability

BY: Pakou Ly

Three New Fiber Lines into Duluth – Connections will enhance speed and reliability

Over the last several weeks multiple projects relying on federal stimulus dollars have been announced that include Duluth as a hub. The recent announcements may also help entice Google further to build its new test network in the region.

“These fiber investments into Duluth provide a vital enhancement of our region’s infrastructure and in our efforts to attract new investment and jobs,” said Duluth Mayor Don Ness. “Whether or not Google selects Duluth, we continue to aggressively pursue all options to enhance our IT capacity. Bandwidth capacity is of growing importance in our ability to compete on a national and international basis.”

The three announced projects include:

1. Duluth to St. Paul - HickoryTech’s subsidiary Enventis was recently awarded a \$16.8 million in stimulus dollars to build 428 miles of fiber-optic cable in Greater Minnesota, the backbone of two new high-speed fiber lines. One line will run between Duluth and St. Paul, while the other will run between Brainerd and Fargo. Both are expected to be finished in three years. For more information: <http://mankatofreepress.com/local/x1836251772/HickoryTech-gets-grant-to-build-cable>

2. Duluth to Green Bay and Michigan’s UP - Ann Arbor-based not-for-profit [Merit Network](http://www.meritnetwork.com) will construct a 1,210-mile high-speed fiber network in Michigan's Upper Peninsula - with connections to Green Bay, Wis. and Duluth, Minn. - following the award of a \$69.6 million federal stimulus grant to fund the project.

<http://www.annarbor.com/business-review/ann-arbor-based-merit-network-lands-696m-grant-to-expand-broadband-in-michigan/>

3. Duluth to NE Minnesota Communities - In March the Northeast Service Cooperative received a \$21.7 million loan, and \$21.7 million grant to fund a fiber project to serve the Iron Range of northeast Minnesota. Construction on that project begins in the spring of 2011, and will be completed by June of 2013. That project includes 34 communities throughout Northeast Minnesota, from Willow River to McGregor, and International Falls to Grand Portage. <http://www.nesc.k12.mn.us/broadband/mmf>

These three projects are considered “middle-mile” projects, meaning federal stimulus dollars will bring the fiber lines into the community, and connect with large buildings like city halls, county courthouses, hospitals, emergency medical centers, etc.

Once the fiber is in a community, private Internet providers or some other large organization can pay to connect the fiber to homes and businesses, covering the “last-mile.” For example, the Google Fiber project is a “last-mile” initiative, meaning the company will make a fiber connection into homes and businesses.

With fiber connections, Internet providers will have the capacity to handle much heavier uses, and provide speeds hundreds of times what is available currently.

“Duluth is well known for our transportation assets – the Seaway Port of Duluth, the International Airport, and our highway system. These significant investments in data transportation for the region will allow companies in hi-tech and other growing sectors of the economy to view Duluth as a world-class information transportation hub as well.” said Brian Hanson, director of Business and Community Development for the City of Duluth.

In addition, Lake County and Cook County are jointly bidding for stimulus funding as well in a “last-mile” project, which would mean fiber for every structure on the current electricity grid.

Benefits to Duluth of these fiber investments:

Redundancy: Having multiple lines connecting with Duluth will mean if one line was cut, other lines would serve as backups, providing uninterrupted service.

Better for Business: More lines to Duluth is like having more highways connecting Duluth, so the community can become a center point for data traffic and therefore a more attractive place to bring a business.

Cheaper Internet: With multiple fiber lines, a savings should be realized on bandwidth prices. Just like physically traveling out of the way is costly, it gets expensive to send Internet traffic a long way, because of interconnect connection fees with other carriers.

A dramatically better Internet: The Northeast Service Cooperative will offer 1,000 megabits per second. Currently cities on T1 lines (much faster what most people have at home) run at 1.5 megabits per second over the mid-mile sections. The benefits also mean better phone systems, and quicker, smoother transmissions of data, such as for digital X-rays.

These investments could enhance Duluth's chances of achieving Google Fiber – there are multiple benefits to a company like Google from these investments.

- A. Demonstrates that our region is forward thinking in Internet infrastructure build outs.
- B. Redundancy improves Duluth as a world-class site for data centers.
- C. Allows companies to test products against each other over multiple networks from one central location.

###

For more information, contact Patrick Garmoe at PureDriven, (218) 461-9655 or Patrick.garmoe@puredriven.com