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SECRETARY LOCKE ANNOUNCES RECOVERY ACT INVESTMENT IN WASHINGTON TO EXPAND BROADBAND INTERNET ACCESS AND SPUR ECONOMIC GROWTH

SEATTLE – U.S. Commerce Secretary Locke today, joined by U.S. Sen. Patty Murray and U.S. Rep. Jay Inslee, announced a \$84 million Recovery Act investment to help bridge the technological divide, boost economic growth, create jobs, and improve education and healthcare in Washington state. The grant will bring high-speed Internet access to more than 100 community anchor institutions – including community colleges, libraries, healthcare facilities, and government agencies – and lay the groundwork for bringing affordable broadband service to thousands of homes and businesses in the region.

The investment will allow the Northwest Open Access Network (NoaNet) to deliver new and enhanced broadband capabilities to some of the more remote regions of the state by adding 830 miles of fiber and eight new microwave sites to their existing high-speed network. Among other benefits, the project plans to directly connect the Jamestown S’Klallam tribal center, library, and clinic, and the Shoalwater tribal center and clinic, as well as provide connection opportunities for the Makah tribal center and clinic.

“This critical investment will expand high-speed Internet service access to Washington libraries and hospitals, and eventually homes and businesses, helping to make them full participants in today’s 21st century information economy,” **Locke said**. “Having access to the Internet’s economic, health and educational benefits will help to improve the quality of life in these communities.”

The Department of Commerce’s National Telecommunications and Information Administration’s (NTIA) Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP), funded by the Recovery Act, provides grants to support the deployment of broadband infrastructure, to enhance and expand public computer centers and to encourage sustainable adoption of broadband service.

“Investing in broadband makes our state more competitive,” **Sen. Murray said**. “Not only with other states here at home, but with other countries around the globe. A person’s ZIP code should never limit their access to learning, high-quality health care, or a chance to grow a small business. This grant will bring telehealth, distance learning, and access to new business tools for

the first time to many regions in our state. It will have a big impact on ensuring we are not leaving communities behind.”

“Broadband access has the ability to empower communities and open markets,” **Rep. Inslee said.** “The Recovery act is helping to put people back to work today as well as build the economic foundation we need to create well paying jobs. Through this grant, NoaNet, the University of Washington and other Internet providers will be able to expand services to Washington state’s rural communities, assist health providers in sharing information, and allow small businesses to connect with each other and the world.”

U.S. Sen. Maria Cantwell, Governor Christine Gregoire and U.S. Reps Norm Dicks, Jim McDermott, Adam Smith, Brian Baird and Rick Larsen also praised today’s award.

“This project will create nearly 2,000 total jobs through its completion,” **Sen. Cantwell said.**

“Just as important, it will expand the NoaNet’s high-speed network so that it can reach more rural communities, lowering the barriers for ‘last mile’ Internet providers to make the investment to bring fast broadband service to un-served and underserved communities. So this means jobs and economic activity both now and in the future.”

"Access to information is essential to build healthy, connected, and economically viable communities," **Governor Gregoire said.** "By building out broadband infrastructure to remote parts of our state we connect people with better healthcare, new education options, research capabilities, and economic opportunities. The people of our state are well served by this funding and it will literally build a foundation for the future."

"This grant will help NoaNet take a major step forward in extending its broadband network to rural and underserved areas in Washington, including tribal centers for the Makah, Jamestown S'Klallam and Shoalwater Bay tribes on the Olympic Peninsula," **Rep. Dicks said.** "This was the goal of our effort 10 years ago to make available excess BPA fiber capacity for this publicly-operated, non-profit project to drive broadband access beyond the major cities in the Northwest."

"Seattle and Washington state have long benefited from broadband and Internet access, and I'm pleased to see that this grant will expand access to more rural and isolated communities," **Rep. McDermott said.** "This grant will greatly enhance the resources available to our state's hospitals and clinics to improve healthcare delivery in the state. As a doctor, I understand the importance of technologies such as remote diagnostic imaging, which allows patients to see specialists who are hundreds of miles away, providing access to care that they might not otherwise have. I want to thank Secretary Locke and the Department of Commerce for recognizing that Washington state will be able to make the most of this grant and I look forward to working on this project as it's implemented."

"In today's interconnected world, it is essential that we continue to expand access to broadband Internet service," **Rep. Smith said.** "This grant helps our state take a significant step forward in bridging the digital divide by expanding existing networks by 830 miles, delivering broadband capabilities to even some of the most remote regions in Washington state. In addition, building this expanded network will create thousands of jobs across the state. This is a win-win for Washington state."

"I applaud the announcement of this stimulus funding to expand the Northwest Open Access Network," **Rep. Baird said.** "The current lack of state-of-the-art broadband service in rural communities hinders economic growth in Southwest Washington. This project will help connect households, institutions, and communities across the state, enhancing commerce, education, and high-speed Internet access for hundreds of thousands of Washington state residents."

“Expanding broadband access is a great example of Recovery Act dollars being put to work in Northwest Washington,” **Rep. Larsen said.** “This grant for NoaNet will create good jobs now and will lay a foundation for future economic growth by connecting homes, hospitals, colleges and businesses across the state.”

NTIA received more than 1,800 applications proposing projects totaling nearly \$19 billion during the first BTOP funding round and is currently awarding grants on a rolling basis. NTIA is currently accepting BTOP applications through March 15, 2010 for a second round of funding.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provided a total of \$7.2 billion to NTIA and the Department of Agriculture’s Rural Utilities Service (RUS) to fund projects that will expand access to and adoption of broadband services. Of that funding, NTIA will utilize \$4.7 billion for grants to deploy broadband infrastructure in the United States, expand public computer center capacity, and encourage sustainable adoption of broadband service. NTIA will announce all grant awards by September 30, 2010.

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U.S. Department of Commerce’s NTIA serves as the Executive Branch agency principally responsible for advising the President on communications and information policy. For further information about NTIA’s BTOP grants, please visit <http://www.ntia.doc.gov/broadbandgrants>.

Thank you

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