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State's New Position Vindicates Citynet

Broadband Project Would Do Less than Previously Stated

BRIDGEPORT, W.Va. – Jim Martin, president and chief executive officer of Citynet, has sent a letter to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration alerting federal officials to the state's change in position on the West Virginia Statewide Broadband Infrastructure Project, which is funded by more than \$126 million in federal stimulus money.

During the West Virginia Broadband Council's meeting Wednesday, state Commerce Secretary Kelley Goes admitted that the project would connect only "critical access facilities" and not 700,000 homes or 110,000 businesses, as state officials contended previously.

"We believe this public disclosure by state officials vindicates Citynet's concerns," Martin wrote. "We further believe the state's plan for the expenditure of the grant funds under the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) is contrary to the requirements of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration and, in its present form, would result in a complete waste of taxpayer money."

Although the statement by Goes has been called a "clarification," Martin wrote that it seems instead to be "a major redefinition of the state's position on the grant, one that more accurately represents the truth about what the state intends to do with the grant money."

Citynet has maintained its position for months in the face of public attacks by state bureaucrats.

"It is unfortunate that actions of these state bureaucrats have misled the NTIA, as well as state and federal elected officials from West Virginia," Martin wrote. "It is about time that these bureaucrats give the NTIA and the citizens of West Virginia the straight account of what they are doing."

Citynet stands ready to work with federal and state officials to see that the broadband project achieves its original objective of establishing a true middle-mile, fiber infrastructure that would benefit all of West Virginia, not the construction of last-mile facilities that would benefit only the incumbent carrier, Frontier Communications, to the detriment of other potential users.

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