



# PRESS RELEASE

## East Texas Broadband Initiative Update

### *BTOP Application Deadline Missed, Future Plans*

**Kilgore, TX, April 19, 2010:** ETCOG officials were notified Friday, April 16, the East Texas Broadband Initiative application for Broadband Technologies Opportunities Program (BTOP) American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding was not submitted before the deadline of March 26, at 9:00 PM. ETCOG's contractor, The Academy for Advanced Telecommunications and Learning Technologies (The Academy), responsible for submitting the application through the grant website attributes congestion of the servers for preventing them from submitting the proposal in time. ETCOG was not the only Council of Governments to suffer this unfortunate outcome.

In February, ETCOG contracted with two agencies, The Academy and L.R. Kimball Technologies, to assist in the development of a grant application and a business plan to develop the first phase of "middle mile" broadband infrastructure in East Texas. Although the BTOP proposal was not submitted within the deadline, the grant application will be converted into a business plan that will allow ETCOG to pursue alternative funding to bring Broadband to East Texas. This remains as one of the primary objectives of the project which will be pursued provided that the initiative continues to receive support from the ETCOG Executive Committee and elected officials.

***"ETCOG did everything in its power to get this application in. This was a very difficult and complex project to execute in just an eight week period. Now we have the opportunity and the responsibility to complete the business plan and refine the engineering to serve our citizenry. We also plan to use this time to enhance and expand our project related partnerships in the public and private sectors," said ETCOG Executive Director, David Cleveland.***

ETCOG believes many objectives have been accomplished through this process:

- Broadband is now an issue and a recognized need in the majority of counties and in a number of the communities in the ETCOG region. Conversations can now be held with government leaders at a number of levels who now have a core knowledge of broadband.

- We have gained a recognition of the role broadband will play in the economic revitalization of our areas hit by industrial closing and layoffs. There is a better understanding of the role for broadband in business recruitment, product distribution, and regional marketing.
- An engineering blueprint has been constructed for connectivity with redundant pathways for providing broadband to the ETCOG and Ark-Tex Council of Government regions.
- Governments and other stakeholders within the region have shown a willingness to contribute nearly \$1 million from their existing and future revenues to address broadband needs.
- Nearly \$30 million has been identified in value for an accessible match for the project, including rights of way, gas pipelines, tower access, and other components.
- Partnerships have been built between the COGs and organizations like the Northeast Texas Consortium, the University of Texas Health Science Center, People's Communications, Network Communications, and others.

For more information, contact ETCOG's Executive Director, David Cleveland, at 903.984.8641 x221 or david.cleveland@etcog.org.

#### **About ETCOG**

The East Texas Council of Governments (ETCOG) is a voluntary association of counties, cities, school districts and special districts within the fourteen-county East Texas region. ETCOG assists local governments in planning for common needs, cooperating for mutual benefit and coordinating for sound regional development. Established in 1970, ETCOG, either directly, or through its contractors, provides programs and services for East Texas seniors, employers, and job seekers. ETCOG and its contractors also build the 9-1-1 emergency call delivery system, provide peace officer training and homeland security planning services; and deliver rural transportation services, business finance programs, and environmental grant funding for the region.

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