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## **Snohomish County Partnering to Expand Broadband Access**

*Washington State Department of Commerce funding expansion of broadband on SR-530 corridor*

**SNOHOMISH COUNTY, Wash., January 18, 2022** – After [today's announcement](#) by the Washington State Department of Commerce Broadband Office of a \$16,713,615 grant to expand broadband access on the SR-530 corridor, Snohomish County leaders praised the partnerships that made the project possible.

“This grant from the Washington State Broadband Office will be transformative for our families, businesses, and educators in Snohomish County, especially those still recovering from the SR-530 landslide,” said Snohomish County Executive Dave Somers. “Broadband deserts are seriously risking the health and welfare of our residents, and this grant will bring residents on the SR-530 corridor economic, educational, health care, and cultural benefits. I appreciate the partnership with the Snohomish County Council and our Broadband Action Team, who spearheaded our efforts to secure this grant. Of course, we are grateful that the Washington state Department of Commerce and Ziplly have joined us in realizing this high priority project.”

“Ensuring equitable access to broadband saves lives and connects our communities,” said Snohomish County Council Chair Megan Dunn. “This vital project will allow a significant number of the county’s rural residents to finally get connected to broadband. These unserved or underserved communities will see multiple benefits, including economic, environmental, and educational.”

“North County has been hit by a series of crises over the last 30 years, from significant economic downturns, to the SR-530 slide, to the challenges of a global pandemic,” said Snohomish County Councilmember Nate Nehring. “This grant will enable thousands of families to gain access to high-quality broadband, allowing for economic, educational, and community transformation. We are very grateful to the Washington State Broadband Office and our many partners who made this a reality. We will continue to make broadband access a priority, particularly for our rural communities.”

“Many of our rural residents have been demanding access to broadband, and I’m very pleased we can finally deliver for some of them,” said Snohomish County Councilmember Sam Low. “This is exactly what we envisioned when we founded the Broadband Action Team: identifying resources and directing them to one of our greatest areas of need. We will continue to make broadband access a priority.”

“Rural communities across the region have been underserved by broadband for years with sometimes devastating results,” said Snohomish County Council Vice Chair Jared Mead. “I am grateful that the Washington state Department of Commerce Broadband Office recognized the significant need in Snohomish County and chose to make this the number one grant. It will ensure all of our communities are connected to vital resources.”

“Many of our urban areas have been served by broadband for years but others have been left out, even in the midst of the recent surge in need for dependable broadband access. Now is the time to expand broadband to those who have been unserved,” said Snohomish County Councilmember Stephanie Wright. “Being connected to broadband can make a significant difference in people’s lives, including access to telemedicine, schools, and family. This grant will have positive impacts on thousands of families.”

The Snohomish County-Ziply Fiber SR530 Project will construct a Fiber to the Premise (FTTP) network across Snohomish County from the City of Arlington to the town of Darrington along the SR-530 corridor. The proposed project will enable fiber connectivity to approximately 5,598 premises. The project scope of work will include Central Office equipment and network infrastructure upgrades to enable gigabit connectivity at each end user location. From Arlington the network will connect Trafton, Cicero, Oso, Rowan, Hazel, Whitehorse, and Darrington.

The SR530 corridor connecting the City of Arlington and the Town of Darrington is an essential regional corridor providing access to timber, outdoor recreation, and community festivals. As small business and other business activities continue to expand into this area, the development of a robust broadband network is essential. An example of this growth is the recently announced Wood Innovation Center being constructed in the Town of Darrington will house a mass-timber production facility and serve as a hub for innovative wood product manufacturing, further. After the heartbreaking Oso landslide in 2014 that effectively cut off the Town of Darrington and communities throughout most of the corridor, it became apparent these communities would be best served by a more robust broadband network. The increased broadband speeds would allow additional opportunities for regional commerce and job growth by enhancing small business opportunities, promoting online education, and creating remote work options to communities that have historically suffered from being underserved and unserved.

Executive Somers and Councilmembers Nehring and Low launched the Snohomish County [Broadband Action Team](#) (BAT) in early 2021. The BAT is a collaboration of stakeholders focused on identifying the need for broadband expansion, raising the awareness of the need, and developing strategies for addressing the need. The stakeholders involved include community leaders from education, healthcare, business, first responders, local government, and broadband providers.

In addition, Snohomish County has allocated an additional \$5 million toward expanding access to broadband as part of its American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. This investment will fund a countywide study to identify gaps in high-quality broadband access, which will then inform future ARPA-funded broadband projects. The goal is to both address service gaps caused by a complete absence of broadband infrastructure as well as improving areas with existing but low-quality broadband.

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