

Sen. Smith: Statement on broadband expansion grant investment

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MADISON – Today, Governor Tony Evers announced more than \$5 million from CARES Act funding to further expand broadband in Wisconsin.

The Public Service Commission (PSC) is responsible for distributing this funding to applicants who did not initially receive funding through the 2020 broadband expansion grant program. Eligible recipients of the funding announced today must also be able to connect customers by December 30, 2020.

“I appreciate Governor Evers’ continued commitment to provide reliable, high-speed internet for residents across our state,” said Senator Jeff Smith (D – Brunswick). *“Today’s announcement – to invest an additional \$5 million in broadband expansion grants – strengthens Governor Evers’ existing record of improving Wisconsin’s broadband infrastructure. From his efforts to invest a historic \$48 million in the biennial budget, to the creation of the Broadband Access Task Force, Governor Evers has made it clear that broadband is an essential service in all of our lives.”*

“I thank Governor Evers’ Administration for recognizing the urgency and importance of these broadband expansion efforts. I’ll continue to offer my support to better connect Wisconsin and improve rural broadband by reintroducing my ‘Better Broadband’ legislative package next session. I hope my Republican colleagues will join me, and at least hold a public hearing on these bills, so we can utilize our resources efficiently and create new opportunities for our rural communities.”

At the time of this announcement, PSC is currently accepting applications for a [second round of broadband expansion grants](#). This funding was made available after Governor Evers signed the 2019-2021 biennial budget allocating a total of \$48 million toward broadband expansion grants. The application period for this second round of grant funding ends on December 1, 2020.

This announcement also comes the same week the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) and Public Service Commission is accepting applications for the [Broadband Connectors Pilot Program](#). According to [WEDC](#), this pilot program will provide six Wisconsin communities “technical assistance so they are better prepared to apply for federal, state and private-sector broadband expansion funds.” The application period for the Broadband Connectors Pilot Program ends on September 30, 2020.