

State Treasurer Godlewski: Announces \$400,000 for broadband expansion in the Town of Drammen in Eau Claire County

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DRAMMEN, Wis. — State Treasurer Sarah Godlewski and the Town of Drammen announced the approval of \$400,000 in financing for broadband expansion from the Board of Commissioners of Public Lands (BCPL).

Drammen will be partnering with 24-7 Telecom, Inc., Downsville, WI and Tri-County Communications Cooperative, Strum, WI to install 58 miles of Fiber-To-The-Home (“FTTH”) broadband network, helping approximately 278 underserved locations across the community gain access to faster internet speeds across 30.2 square miles of the Town of Drammen.

Spurred by challenges that existed even prior to the pandemic, the town received requests from residents and businesses to find a provider that could bring more affordable and reliable service. After conducting a survey with town residents in early 2020, results revealed that sufficient broadband speeds were unavailable to most citizens living in the project radius - with some noting they needed to drive to nearby Eau Claire and Menomonie just to get access.

“High-quality internet is critical as Wisconsinites work to grow their small businesses, access learning resources, and much more. The pandemic has shined a flashlight on the critical need for broadband access that many of our rural communities have been struggling with for years,” said State Treasurer Sarah Godlewski. “As the Chair of the BCPL, I’m proud that we’re able to provide this funding and help the Drammen community and my home county of Eau Claire

bridge the digital divide ”

Despite being in the initial development stages, early timelines provided by 24-7 Telecom And Tri-County Communications indicate that the network would hopefully be operational by sometime in late 2022 or early in 2023.

Bonnie Isaacson, Town of Drammen Treasurer recently stated “For years, Town of Drammen residents have struggled with poor, non-dependable internet service. We were extremely pleased to receive the financing approval for broadband expansion in our area and thank the State Trust Loan Program for providing this loan. We are thrilled to partner with 24-7 Telcom and Tri-County Communications as we move forward with this project. In this day and age, fast and dependable internet service has become quite necessary and our Drammen Township school children, small business owners, and those who use the internet regularly will benefit greatly.”

Financing for this project was provided by the State Trust Fund Loan Program, a long-standing effort by the (BCPL) to provide affordable loans to municipalities and school districts for economic development, infrastructure, and other public-purpose projects. The BCPL has stepped up and ensured economic opportunity by providing financing for over 170 Wisconsin communities this past year.

Earnings from BCPL investments are annually distributed to public schools across Wisconsin to fund books and technology, with the most recent distribution being a record-setting \$39 million.