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FIBER INTERNET TO BRING URBAN CONNECTIVITY TO VAN BUREN COUNTY

Bloomingtondale Communications' \$12 million investment will expand, modernize internet capabilities.

Bloomingtondale, MI—Internet connectivity designed to position rural communities for future success is the focus of a \$12 million fiber network infrastructure project underway by Bloomingtondale Communications. Significant improvements to internet speed, reliability and capabilities will roll out in phases to customers in Bloomingtondale and surrounding service areas as the Fiber to the Home (FTTH) infrastructure is installed.

“Bloomingtondale Communications is really excited to be able to continue to move forward the services that we offer customers,” says Steve Shults, General Manager of Bloomingtondale Communications. “Building an all Fiber to the Home (FTTH) network in our Bloomingtondale Exchange means we will be able to offer the fastest broadband speeds to our customers, even in the most rural areas of our service territory.”

The multi-phase project will span three to five years; the engineering/design phase kicks off this month. Initial FTTH groundbreaking is expected in Bloomingtondale this fall, with the new fiber service to debut to customers in early 2019. Bloomingtondale Communications leadership anticipates the project will move swiftly to better serve homes, businesses, schools, government offices and other entities such as healthcare facilities.

Townships in the Bloomingtondale Exchange FTTH network project include Bloomingtondale, Columbia and Waverly in Van Buren County along with Cheshire and Lee Townships in Allegan County (see attached map). The project additionally has potential to expand modern internet service to adjacent, underserved rural areas as well as lake associations and developing subdivisions, Shults notes.

The design and engineering phase will include invitations to local governing bodies to integrate upcoming projects such as sewer and roadway improvements to efficiently upgrade multiple infrastructures and position communities for success. “We want to work with the local municipalities to build the future of our communities together,” Shults says.

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Founded by local stakeholders in 1905 to bring telephone service to Bloomingdale's outlying farms, Bloomingdale Communications is poised to once again modernize rural connections to the world. While the FTTH project will take several years to complete, the new technology will start to roll out to community members as early as next year. Customer rates will remain the same, with potential to be reduced once fully installed and operational.

The initiative is ahead of the curve in terms of USDA Department of Agriculture's recently announced plans to expand national rural broadband connectivity with new programs and \$1 billion in funding. Affordable, reliable, modern internet connectivity is simply not available to 24 million Americans, and four out of five of those people are rural residents, USDA reports.

Rural connectivity challenges led Bloomingdale Communications to develop the \$12 million FTTH project with support of a 20-year Rural Utilities Service loan via the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development. "We'd like to thank the Rural Utilities Service for providing the funding for this project, which we know will be great for our customers and communities," Shults says.

The Bloomingdale Communications FTTH project will:

- Provide significantly faster internet upload and download speeds.
- Increase reliability of the Bloomingdale Communications network.
- Future-proof our communities' connections with the world.
- Provide sustainable and affordable Internet communication.
- Work with local municipalities to build strong communities, together.

"Our board and great employees are committed to providing the latest in modern services to our customers," Shults says. "We know this project will help us to provide those services to businesses, families, seniors and community institutions. We also hope that this will help position the Bloomingdale area for economic growth in the future."

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About Bloomingdale Communications: Bloomingdale Communications was founded in 1905 and through the years has grown to become a competitive, community-focused company owned by local stockholders. We like what we do and get real satisfaction from not only delivering service including TV, voice line and giga-bytes of data to our customers, but also by supporting our communities' growth and sustainability. For more about us, visit www.bloomingdalecom.net.

Bloomington Exchange

