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Ohio picks up speed

The governor highlights a technological upgrade

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John Kasich introduced the concept as “the best technology that you’ve never heard of.” He did so in his State of the State address, saluting a government official named Al Stutz, who years ago had the foresight to purchase and lay the groundwork for a fiber optic network now operated by the Ohio Academic Resources Network. What the governor shared is that the state is moving to upgrade the network, reaping a big return on a relatively small investment of \$10 million.

How big of a return? Kasich, in his usual way, offered an enthusiastic assessment, “huge, huge benefits. ... change the face of the entire state of Ohio.” Apply the hyperbole factor, and it still is a most promising development. The investment will take the rate of speed from 10 gigabytes to 100 gigabytes per second, allowing universities, hospitals and businesses to share information at a much greater pace and volume.

It isn’t an exaggeration to say that Ohio would have a competitive edge. Only Indiana has something comparable in the works. It doesn’t match the more than 1,800 miles of fiber in Ohio, a pipeline for the state to attract medical research, manufacturing, engineering and other realms, all looking to trade and collaborate more heavily and quickly in complex data and images.

This amounts to an advantage in gaining federal research grants, a crucial step in view of the talent such funding brings and the innovation it spurs, advancing businesses and job creation.

The plan calls for connecting Columbus, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Dayton and Toledo to the network by June, with Akron, Youngstown and Athens following in October. The country as a whole has been struggling to keep pace globally with the accelerating speed of information. Here is an example of Ohio leading the way.

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