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\$30M in stimulus money targets area broadband service

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Staff Report

Updated 8:07 AM Friday, August 27, 2010

WAPAKONETA — Com Net Inc. hopes to begin construction early in 2011 on a federally funded project to extend broadband service to rural and underserved communities in 28 western Ohio counties.

The new fiber network is to be operating by July 2013, three years from when Com Net was designated to receive \$30 million in federal economic stimulus funds to do the project, said Diane Kahn, a spokeswoman for the Wapakoneta-based company.

A required environmental assessment must be done before construction can begin. Most of the construction will involve burying fiber cable underground, Kahn said Thursday, Aug. 26.

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Among the underserved areas targeted for the new service are parts of Butler, Champaign, Clinton, Clark, Darke, Greene, Miami, Preble and Warren counties.

Officials hope that extending broadband service to areas that don't have it will help support economic growth.

Similar federally funded projects are planned in other parts of Ohio. Last week, Gov. Ted Strickland announced that Horizon Telecom, of Chillicothe, was chosen to receive \$66.5 million and the Cleveland-based nonprofit organization OneCommunity \$44.8 million to extend broadband service networks in their regions.
