



U.S. SENATOR MARIA CANTWELL

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Cantwell Announces \$27.3M Grant for High-Speed, Affordable Broadband in Pend Oreille County

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA) announced that the Pend Oreille County Public Utility District (PUD) will receive a \$27.3 million federal grant to bring high-speed, affordable broadband access to underserved communities in northeastern Washington. The project will deliver affordable, high-speed broadband access to as many as 3,200 households, 360 businesses, and 24 community anchor institutions, while enhancing Internet capabilities for health care facilities, higher education institutions and government offices.

“Pend Oreille County is a rural jewel in Washington state, a region that appreciates its rural roots. But there’s no reason why residents and businesses there should have to live with slow Internet traffic. It’s past time to bring the information superhighway to Northeast Washington,” said Cantwell. **“Investing in broadband will translate into economic growth. This grant is part of our broader push for universal access to high-speed Internet, so all receive equal educational, business and employment opportunities no matter where they live in Washington state.”**

The grant will allow the Pend Oreille PUD to deploy an open access fiber-optic broadband network along its electric service route to to-the-premises of healthcare providers, school districts, libraries, government buildings, the Kalispell Tribe, significant commercial users, and others within the County. Additionally, the grant will allow Pend Oreille PUD to upgrade its existing broadband backbone that connects the new optical fiber optic broadband network to the Internet at large. Pend Oreille PUD would then offer broadband service on a wholesale basis to competing broadband resellers, who would in turn sell the service to residents, businesses, and government at retail.

“This is wonderful news!” said Diane Wear, the Chair of the Board of Pend Oreille County Commissioners. **“We want to thank Senator Cantwell for taking the time to meet with PUD Commissioner Knapp and I, to learn more about this project, during her visit to Pend Oreille County. This project will assist our economically distressed area to attract new business and cottage industry, as well as better serve our constituents, hospital, and other public entities. Thank you Senator Cantwell for your hard work on our behalf.”**

"I am genuinely thrilled that the vision of the District and the enabling stimulus grant from the NTIA will make the next generation utility, broadband, available to our underserved county," said Joe Onley, Pend Oreille PUD Community Network System Manager.**"This grant will make the impossible possible to further serve in our community."**

This funding is part of The Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration's (NTIA) Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP), funded by *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act*.

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