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CONTACT: Mark Tolbert 202-482-8176
or press@ntia.doc.gov

NTIA ANNOUNCES FIRST STATE BROADBAND MAPPING GRANTS

Recovery Act Funding to Provide Policymakers and Consumers with Improved Data on Internet Service in California, Indiana, North Carolina, and Vermont

WASHINGTON – The Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) today announced that it has awarded the first four grants under NTIA's State Broadband Data and Development Grant Program to fund activities in California, Indiana, North Carolina, and Vermont. The program, funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, will increase broadband access and adoption through better data collection and broadband planning. The data will be displayed in NTIA's national broadband map, a tool that will inform policymakers' efforts and provide consumers with improved information on the broadband Internet services available to them.

“Broadband will bring many benefits to the Nation, such as job creation and innovation, but these benefits have been delayed by the lack of comprehensive, reliable data on the availability of broadband service,” said Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information and NTIA Administrator Lawrence E. Strickling. “This program addresses an important need and will provide a valuable tool in bringing broadband and jobs to more Americans.”

NTIA received applications representing all 50 states, 5 territories, and the District of Columbia to participate in the program, meaning that all governments that were eligible to apply for grants did so, whether directly or through a designated entity. The agency is currently reviewing the remaining 52 applications and expects to continue announcing awards on a rolling basis throughout the fall.

A summary of the four awards announced today is as follows:

- The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) is awarded approximately \$1.8 million; the Indiana Office of Technology (IOT) is awarded approximately \$1.3 million; the Rural Economic Development Center, Inc. (e-NC Authority) is awarded approximately \$1.6 million; and the Vermont Center for Geographic Information (VCGI) is awarded approximately \$1.2 million to collect and verify the availability, speed, and location of broadband across the states of California, Indiana, North Carolina, and Vermont, respectively. This activity is to be conducted on a semi-annual basis between 2009 and 2011, with initial data coming available in November 2009 to inform broadband policy efforts. Awardees are to present the data in a clear and accessible format to the public, government, and the research community.

- The CPUC is also awarded \$500,000 for the cost of broadband planning activities in California over four years, bringing its grant award total to approximately \$2.3 million. In addition, the e-NC Authority is awarded approximately \$435,000 for the cost of broadband planning activities in North Carolina over five years, bringing its grant award total to over \$2 million.

"The four award recipients submitted well-formed proposals that are both fiscally prudent and serve as a model for others," Strickling added. "We are committed to making the program succeed nationwide and will continue to provide guidance to applicants where necessary to help them improve their proposed projects."

NTIA noted that the four award recipients submitted grant applications that met or exceeded program requirements in all areas. For example:

- **Data Collection:** While all four recipients plan to collect data directly from broadband providers, each also described plans to collect or utilize data from other sources. Examples include wireless propagation models, speed tests, online and field surveys, and drive testing. Recipients also plan to use existing datasets that were developed for other purposes but are valuable for broadband mapping, including orthophotography, parcel maps, and E911 datasets.
- **Verification:** The recipients will use multiple verification methods, and each also plans to use independent verifiers to conduct data verification work.
- **Collaboration:** Recipients demonstrated that the relevant state agencies are committed to the success of the project and plan to be actively engaged in its leadership. Each recipient is collaborating with other state partners, resulting in plans that are unique to each state's needs and capabilities. In addition, while current Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and/or broadband resources vary by state, recipients described how their projects will integrate and leverage existing capacity.

The State Broadband Data and Development Grant Program is a matching grant program that implements the joint purposes of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and the Broadband Data Improvement Act (BDIA). The program will provide grants to assist states or their designees in gathering and verifying state-specific data on the availability, speed, location, and technology type of broadband services. The data they collect and compile will also be used to develop publicly available state-wide broadband maps and to inform the comprehensive, interactive, and searchable national broadband map that NTIA is required by the Recovery Act to create and make publicly available by February 17, 2011.

The national broadband map will publicly display the geographic areas where broadband service is available; the technology used to provide the service; the speeds of the service; and broadband service availability at public schools, libraries, hospitals, colleges, universities, and public buildings. The national map will also be searchable by address and show the broadband providers offering service in the corresponding census block or street segment.

Awardees are required to contribute at least 20 percent non-federal matching funds toward project costs. In addition, while the BDIA mandates that each state may designate only one eligible entity to receive

funds under the program, each state's applicant will be carefully evaluated and must meet the standards described in NTIA's Notice of Funds Availability for this program in order to receive funding.

U.S. Department of Commerce's NTIA serves as the executive branch agency principally responsible for advising the President on communications and information policy. For more information about the NTIA, visit www.ntia.doc.gov.

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