

**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Public-Private Partnership to Bring World Class Broadband Services to Central Alabama**

BIRMINGHAM: Announced last week, eight counties and the only federally recognized Native American Tribe in Alabama will share \$59,258,545 in grant funds to build a Broadband Super Highway through the heart of the Alabama Black Belt. Funding comes from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act's Broadband Technologies Opportunities Program (BTOP). The grant is matched with an additional \$26,998,435 which includes both in-kind and private matching capital, for a total project value of \$86,256,980. When completed, the project will directly impact nearly 72,000 households, businesses and anchor institutions.

The grant, released by the US Dept. of Commerce National Telecommunications and Information Agency (NTIA), has been awarded to Trillion Communications Corporation, headquartered in Bessemer, Alabama. Trillion will serve as the grant awardee, fiduciary and program manager for the project.

The Trillion Team is comprised of multiple, minority-based businesses, community-outreach organizations, and government bodies from both Alabama and Georgia. The Regional Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA), led by Ms. Patricia Hanes, was instrumental in helping form the Trillion Team, as well as ensuring that the application met NTIA requirements. Trillion partner, A-PLUS Community Solutions, Inc, with the Lowndes County Commission in the lead, established a Public-Private Partnership which shall be expanded to include seven additional counties, the municipalities within those counties, and the Escambia Poarch Band of Creek Indian Tribe. Together, this group shall form the South Central Alabama Broadband Commission (SCABC).

SCABC, a non-profit Broadband Authority, shall include the following municipal members: Lowndes, Macon, Crenshaw, Dallas, Escambia, Wilcox, Butler, and Conecuh Counties as well as each city within each county. SCABC shall also include the Poarch Band of Creek Indian Tribe, which is the only federally recognized Indian Tribe within the State of Alabama. Trillion recruited several key firms equipped with the technical, business and financial capacity to organize, design and finance a plan to compete for a share of \$7.2 billion in BTOP funding. The \$59 million dollar grant award required a cash and in-kind match of \$26 million. Of the match, \$25 million was made possible by a private investment obtained by A2D, Inc a Georgia-based Broadband Infrastructure Development and Operations Firm, and a principal partner of the Trillion Team. The remainder of the match was made possible by in-kind contributions and support was provided from a strategic consortium of partners including Tuskegee University, Alabama State University, Faith in Action Outreach Ministries, The Poarch Band of Creek Indian Nation Council, Lowndes County Commission, Access Now Inc, A2D Inc and A-PLUS Community Solutions Inc. Finally, the project received letters of support from over 100 community anchor institutions and community stakeholders including Governor Bob Riley, Connecting Alabama, and the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA).

The Trillion Team will design, construct and install a next generation broadband infrastructure which will then be transferred to the SCABC, where it will eventually be expanded across the region. A2D Inc will serve as SCABC's long-term operator of the eCommunity Broadband Network. eCommunity will enable multiple, fee-based commercial services providers to actively compete to deliver their broadband-based services across a single community-owned infrastructure that will be directly connected to the end-user. In advance of receiving an award, A2D has already secured agreements from several commercial and community-based service providers who are ready to deliver their broadband-based services across the community-owned network.

For those who can't afford fee-based broadband services from commercial providers, eCommunity will also enable community-outreach organizations, anchor institutions, and governmental agencies to offer free or subsidized intranet-based broadband access directly to the vulnerable populations they already serve. It will also link anchor institutions such as schools, libraries, health care facilities together as well as provide the means for small businesses to expand their markets and help stimulate new business development. The project will also enhance public safety services by creating an interoperable network among public safety agencies in all eight counties. This enhancement will allow public safety agencies to communicate and direct first responders within and across multiple jurisdictions utilizing both fiber-based and 700 MHz wireless interoperability standards.

The goals of the project include but are not limited to:

- Construction of over 2,200 miles of new fiber, to extend the reach of limited existing fiber networks, offering a variety of wholesale services at speeds up to 1 Gigabits per second and transport services at speeds up to 10 Gigabits per second.
- New or improved broadband service for 72,000 households and 3,000 businesses by enabling local Internet service providers to utilize the project's open network at 45 points of interconnection.
- Direct connections to approximately 400 anchor institutions, including as many as 34 public safety entities, 91 K-12 schools, four libraries, five community colleges, two additional institutions of higher education, 16 healthcare facilities, and 219 government buildings and centers. Among the higher education institutions in the region are Auburn University, Miles College, Reed Technical College, Alabama State University and Tuskegee University.
- Ensure that everyone in the region has access to the broadband-based services, content and resources they need, regardless of their socio-economic condition.

Trillion Communications was formed in 2001. As a certified Minority Business Enterprise, Trillion manages supply chain services for communications customers nationwide, and has provided procurement, warehousing, project management, and inventory management services for AT&T, Verizon Network Services, Qwest (now Century Tel) and others. Trillion has presence in Bessemer, Alabama; Atlanta, Georgia; South Bend, Indiana; and Easthampton, New Jersey.

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