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Regional fiber optic project progresses in region

The Illinois Fiber Resources Group (iFiber) has announced construction crews from Aldridge Electric Company/Kelso-Burnett have moved into Belvidere, Rockford and other nearby areas. Construction in the zone is expected to continue through the end of the year.

The immediate work plan includes areas in the City of Belvidere; IL 72 in Ogle County from the Ogle/DeKalb county line to Byron; IL 72 in DeKalb County from the Ogle/DeKalb county line to Kirkland; Route 251 in Ogle County from IL 72 to IL 64; Route 64 in Ogle County from Route 251 to Oregon; and also areas within the City of Rockford.

Since August, Aldridge/Kelso-Burnett crews have installed nearly 20 miles of the iFiber network between Rockford, Belvidere and Cherry Valley, along Business 20; and also along IL 72, near I-39.

Fiber optic construction will occur within the dedicated roadway right-of-way. During the construction of the fiber optic network, residents will see cable boring equipment in their neighborhood, as well as hand-hole construction crews. Crews also may have staked or painted to identify infrastructure in the area. Disturbed areas will be restored as part of the project.

In September 2010, Northern Illinois University as the fiscal agent, received a \$68.5 million NTIA Broadband Technology Opportunity Program grant to deploy an almost 900-mile network across the northwest Illinois region. The project will bring up to 10 Gbps speeds, significantly improving the ability to leverage broadband technology for improvements in rural education, economic opportunities and public safety.

iFiber was established as a not-for-profit entity in January 2011, to address current and future high-speed Internet needs of communities across northwest Illinois. Counties included are Boone, Carroll, JoDaviess, LaSalle, Lee, Ogle, Stephenson, Whiteside, and Winnebago.

iFiber is a public-private partnership that will provide access to the new fiber optic network to community anchor institutions such as schools, government, libraries, community colleges and health care providers. Through its service provider partners, iFiber also will promote similar high speed network transport services to businesses and residential subscribers in the private sector.

The grant is administered by NIU and is an Illinois Broadband Opportunity Partner (IBOP). Design engineering and permitting are being coordinated by Baxter & Woodman. Construction is being completed by PirTano Construction Company (Addison, IL) in Carroll, JoDaviess, Lee and Whiteside counties; and Aldridge Electric (Libertyville, IL), which partnered with Kelso-Burnett (Rockford, IL), in Boone, LaSalle, Ogle, Stephenson and Winnebago counties.

The iFiber Board includes representatives from NIU, LaSalle County, North Central Illinois Council of Governments, the City of Rockford, Boone County, and Blackhawk Hills RC&D.

For more information about the iFiber project, visit www.ifiber.org. In addition, questions about the iFiber project may be directed to info@ifiber.org.

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