

Cloquet Valley Internet Initiative

Working together to bring high speed internet and more options to the region

Options available in this area for cell phones, Internet and television service are limited. In some areas, cell phone or high-speed Internet service are unavailable at all. The DSL Internet connection through Frontier or Century Link/Qwest is not as fast as true “broadband” and demand often exceeds capacity, leading to even slower speeds.

As more services are offered over the Internet, we are being left behind. Those who want to telecommute from home won't be able to do so. Students will miss out on important educational opportunities. And fire and safety operations may be affected, as telecommunications are unreliable. In a rural area such as ours, being able to access certain service, such as healthcare, could be vital.

Representatives from area townships have been meeting to seek a solution to this problem. Townships in the Cloquet Valley — Alden, Ault, Fairbanks, Gnesen, Normanna, Northstar, Pequaywan and Unorganized — need to make sure that we not are left out of the planning for high speed Internet access that is going on in Lake County and other areas.

An important component of this effort is demonstrating the interest of area residents — both year round and seasonal — in improving current Internet, phone and television service. In order to convince providers of Internet access to either initiate service or improve their current level of service, we need to demonstrate potential demand.

A variety of approaches are being investigated, such as national programs that extend broadband to rural areas, participation in new projects like the Lake County Fiber Optic Project, or expansion and improvement by current providers. Those volunteers working on the *Cloquet Valley Internet Initiative*, the name currently given to this effort, have been meeting with officials from Lake and St. Louis Counties, and representatives of the Coop Light and Power, among others, to determine what options are available to us and have secured a grant from the Blandin Foundation for a consultant knowledgeable in this area.

Resident support and interest are the keys to making anything happen and definitely for getting any sort of government funding or grants. No one will pay attention to us unless residents stand up and say... *Yes, we want better service. We want more choices. We want to take full advantage of all the potential the Internet is offering, whether personal or business related.*

Members of the initiative will be contacting neighbors to get feedback on their interest and suggestions for how to proceed. You may be contacted by Email, in person or by mail. If you are missed, you can send in your comments electronically to: internet@pequaywanlakes.com

We will continue to keep you informed. We have put up a web page that will chronicle efforts and plans — <http://www.pequaywanlakes.com/internet>. And, of course, since we are aware of the limited Internet service in this area, we will also be using printed materials to keep residents informed!

What is the Lake County fiber optic project?

Using funds from the US Department of Agriculture Rural Utility Service, Lake County is building a fiber-to-the-home network serving Lake County and a portion of eastern St. Louis County. Residents in this area will be able to receive new state-of-the-art telecommunication services, including ultra-high-speed symmetric (two-way) broadband service, video services, conventional voice services and new services that are available only via fiber-optic cables.

The Cloquet Valley Internet Initiative is investigating whether it would be feasible to extend that network to include our area, as one option to increase the Internet service here.

Fiber-to-the-home networks differ from conventional telecommunications services, which are delivered over a copper line (DSL service), copper coaxial cable (cable service) or wireless services (ground based tower or satellite services). Fiber-optic networks deliver data through fiberglass fiber, using lasers and other technologies that operate at speeds up to 10 to 100 times faster than conventional services.

Is broadband the same as fiber optics?

Broadband refers to the speed at which Internet services are delivered. Fiber optics comprise the cables that carry light as a signal to bring that information to the home. Fiber optics is much faster than DSL.

What advantages does higher speed Internet service bring?

It basically allows you to be connected to the world in any way that you want.. You could work from home, teach or take a class from home, watch movies when there is too much snow to go to town. Through Skype you can video conference with family or business coworkers or customers. Some doctors are now using such telecommunication to reach patients in outlying area. The possibilities are endless.

The critical point for us is that without a reliable high speed Internet service, we could be left behind as critical services become available, such as healthcare services or online education.

I am a seasonal cabin owner. Will there be reasonable rate?

That is the goal so seasonals could subscribe for the length of time that they are in the area.

Will I have options to choose a combination of services, for instance, television and internet, but not phone?

Normally the homeowner can choose which service (internet and/or television and/or telephone) they wish to take.