



Van Buren County
MICHIGAN

Market Van Buren Contact: Mary Morphey
Mobile: (269) 369-6657
MorpheyM@Kinexus.org

Van Buren County Contact: Lisa Ransler
(269) 657-8200, ext.1073
ranslerl@vanburencountymi.gov
January 24, 2024

Joint Press Release - For Immediate Release

STATE GRANT TO MAKE VAN BUREN ONE OF THE MOST CONNECTED RURAL COUNTIES IN MICHIGAN

PAW PAW, Mich.- With technology growing at rapid pace, the teams at Market Van Buren and Van Buren County saw an opportunity that would advance their community and ensure it remains competitive. High-speed fiber internet is coming to 3,734 unserved and underserved rural residents and businesses in Van Buren County, as result of the State of Michigan’s Realizing Opportunity with Broadband Infrastructure Networks grant program (ROBIN).

The grant was awarded to Midwest Energy & Communications, a Michigan-based internet service provider, for a project that will bring fiber service to nearly 7,000 unserved and underserved addresses in Berrien, Cass, St. Joseph (MI), and Van Buren Counties. The State defines “unserved and underserved” as addresses that do not currently have access to internet speeds of at least 100 Mbps download and 20 Mbps upload.

As part of the grant, Market Van Buren, Van Buren County, 13 Van Buren County townships, DCS Technology Design, and Midwest Energy & Communications came together in a historic collaboration to address the needs of rural Van Buren County residents who have lacked access to high-speed, reliable broadband.

“Van Buren County is proud to announce this transformational event. As stated in the past, we are grateful for the partnerships that have made this opportunity possible. Those responsible for this development are many and include County staff, DCS Technology Design, Market Van Buren, MEC, State representatives, local units of government, and the leadership of the County Commissioners,” said Randall Peat, Chair of the Van Buren County Board of Commissioners. “The establishment of a county-wide high-speed broadband system will enhance the health, safety, and well-being of County residents, guests, and the business community. This was truly a team effort for the betterment of Van Buren County as a whole.”

MEC will invest \$15.8 million, and the State will contribute roughly \$25.3 million to the overall project serving the four counties. Meanwhile, in Van Buren County, the County will contribute over \$4.1 million and 13 townships nearly \$1.4 million. The 13 townships include: Alma, Antwerp, Bangor, Covert, Decatur, Hamilton, Hartford, Keeler, Lawrence, Paw Paw, Pine Grove, Porter, and South Haven.

The project will reach an additional 1,995 addresses considered served by the State, bringing the total number of addresses that will benefit from this project to 5,729.

“Six years ago, the Market Van Buren Board of Directors adopted a seven-point plan. The top priority identified was broadband internet for every home and business in the county. Through the leadership of the County Commissioners, along with the expertise of MEC and DCS Technology Design, we are now in a position to be the most connected rural county in the State of Michigan,” stated Zach Morris, Executive Director of Market Van Buren.

Construction has already begun in some areas within Van Buren County and will continue through 2026 due to the amount of new infrastructure required for the project. Interested individuals can visit teammidwest.com/internet to check their eligibility.

About Market Van Buren

Market Van Buren is a nonprofit focused on connecting people, investments, and organizations with strategies and services that improve the quality of life and economic conditions in Cass and Van Buren counties. Our staff focuses on developing strategies that will allow our communities to thrive by addressing needs related to workforce, community, and business development. For more information, visit www.marketvanburen.org, follow us on Twitter @MarketVanBuren, or “like” us on Facebook @MarketVanBuren.

About Van Buren County

Van Buren County, a rural county in Southwest Michigan, boasts fourteen miles of beautiful Lake Michigan shoreline, 300 in-land lakes, two scenic rivers, a strong agricultural heritage, two interstate corridors and a diverse business community. Its government leadership is comprised of a governing body of County Commissioners, Elected Officials, Courts and an appointed Administrator/Contoller. For more information, visit www.vanburencountymi.gov, “like” us on Facebook @VanBurenCountyMI, follow on Twitter @VanBurenCoMI.

###