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Wisconsin Technology Council applauds state proposal to boost rural broadband

MADISON – In line with past recommendations by its board of directors, leadership of the Wisconsin Technology Council expressed support Thursday for a proposal that would speed deployment of broadband and related technology programs.

Gov. Scott Walker has asked the Wisconsin Legislature to pass a proposal to spend an additional \$35.5 million on the Broadband Expansion Grant Program and the Technology for Educational Achievement program over the next three fiscal years. Broadband is a term generally used to describe wide-bandwidth, high-speed connections to the internet.

The money comes from a surplus in the Universal Service Fund. The broadband expansion funds would be administered through the Public Service Commission, and the TEACH program funds would be managed through the Department of Administration. Read a news release on Walker's proposal [here](#).

The state dollars will likely augment a coming infusion of federal dollars through the Connect America Fund 2. Wisconsin ranks second only behind California among the 50 states in CAF2 dollars earmarked between now and 2020. The rollout will be discussed at a Jan. 24 Tech Council Innovation Network meeting in Madison.

“As our board of directors has noted in past publications and recommendations, broadband is essential to the economic and cultural health of rural Wisconsin,” Tech Council President Tom Still said.

Still added: “Adequate broadband connections can help stem the loss of rural population and jobs. It can enhance eCommerce for businesses large and small; bolster public safety; improve health through telemedicine; boost tourism by encouraging visitors to stay longer; entice Millennials to stay put and connected; and improve education for kids who otherwise lose their internet connections once they leave the school grounds.”

The Tech Council is an independent, non-profit group that regularly issues reports and recommendations on topics related to Wisconsin's tech-based economy.

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