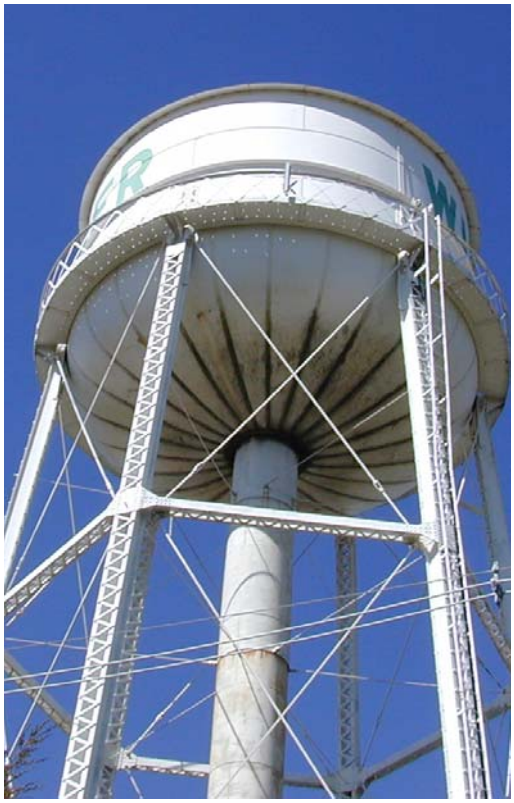


Saline County, Nebraska

Public-Private Partnerships Bring Broadband Access to Communities

Located 40 miles southwest of Lincoln, Wilber is the county seat of Saline County and the nation's Czech capital. Thanks to a public private partnership between local governments and a small telephone company, this community of 1,700 also boasts wireless broadband access.

With assistance from University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension, Wilber formed a technology committee in 1996 to address the need for local dial-up access in the community. The committee proved to the local telephone company that sufficient demand existed in the community.

Over the next 6 years, the committee has met three additional times to discuss developing a community Web site, developing and maintaining a county Web site, and obtaining broadband Internet access. Technologies Across Nebraska, a University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension-led coalition, has provided assistance to the technology committee in these efforts. Randy Pryor, Extension Educator in Saline County, and Jim Emal,

University of Nebraska Director of Strategic Technologies, have provided training in the use of technology and have helped residents understand the benefits of broadband communications. Their expertise in working with communities and telecommunications providers contributed to the committee's success.

To address broadband availability, the committee worked with Diode Communications, a subsidiary of Diller Telephone Company. In exchange for being able to locate an antenna on the Wilber water tower, Diode agreed to give city offices free Internet access. Diode purchased a T1 to the water tower in Wilber and placed three antennas on the tower, making the tower a hub for the area. An open house held in Wilber netted approximately 25 subscriptions for broadband service. Residents within 8-9 miles and an unimpeded line of sight to the tower can receive broadband service.

Randy Sandman, President of Diode Communications explained how Diode works with communities: "Here at Diode we use various means to build community support. Most times, communities that are needing access to broadband services give us a call. Those leaders really want to work with us hand in hand. One of the first things we do is to ask those community leaders for their help in doing some surveys of their business folks and how many people in those communities need the service, want the service, would take the service from us. "

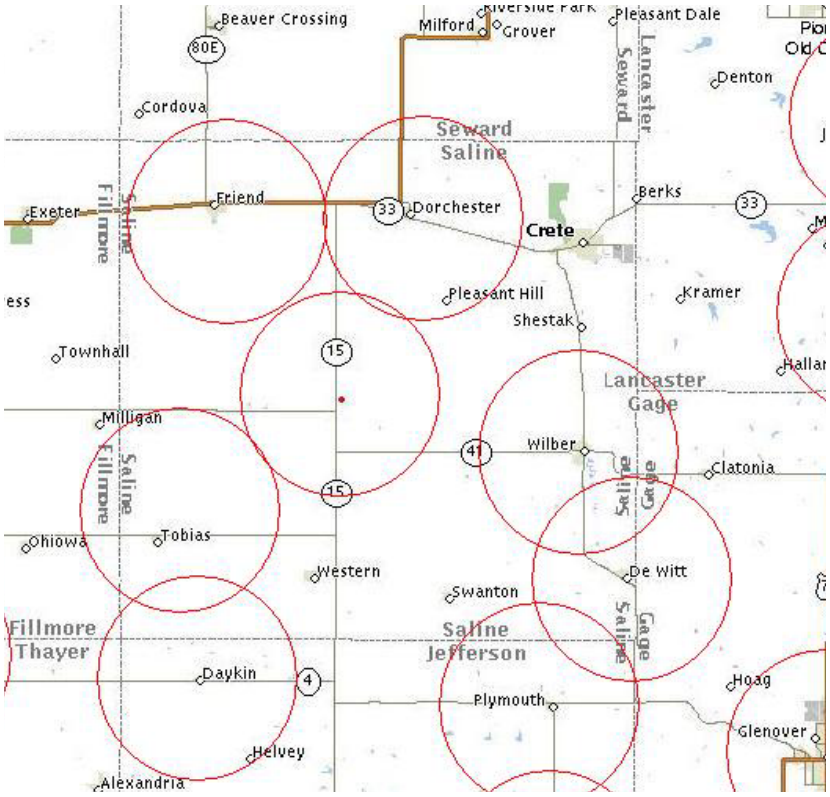
Sandman added, "Another way that we build interest is doing open houses in each community that we roll services into. Most of the time it is done right after we start the service, but sometimes we will have an open house to get interest generated before the signal is really being transmitted from different tower sites."

Timeline for Broadband Wireless Deployment in Saline County

March 6	Initial meeting in Wilber
March 9-11	GPS readings and engineering layout
March 21	Met with Friend and Dorchester Coop Staff
March 26	Met with Saline County Commissioners
April 1	Met with Dorchester Village Board
April 9	Met with Saline County Commissioners
May 6	Dorchester Village approved use of water tower
Mid May	Deployed antennas at Wilber and began service
May 29	Held open house in Wilber
July-August	Deployed Saline Center antennas, Friend and Dorchester
Sept. 17	Deployed Tobias Area Tower

Diode Communications has also worked with co-ops and local governments in other communities in Saline County to provide broadband service.

“Partnering with the cities and the counties to bring wireless Internet out to their underserved areas has really been a win-win situation,” commented Sandman.



Above: The map above illustrates the wireless broadband coverage in Saline County. Top Right: The Saline Center tower hosts Diode antennas. Bottom Right: A wireless receiver sits outside a house in Wilber.

Sandman offers the following advice to communities:

1. Research the technology and what it can and cannot do. Wireless may not be feasible for every community. Too many trees and hills can interfere with wireless reception.

2. Research the vendor or the company that is going to be providing the service. Choosing a well-established company that provides good customer service is important.

3. Be willing to negotiate. Communities should be willing to allow providers to place antennas on water towers, grain elevators or other high spots in exchange for Internet service.

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