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JOHNSON ANNOUNCES ECOM-OHIO STUDY
Survey to Determine Broadband Use and Accessibility in Ohio

COLUMBUS – Lieutenant Governor Bruce Johnson today announced the Ohio Department of Development (ODOD) has commissioned an ECom-Ohio Study to examine the availability and cost of high bandwidth network services for business and government use. The study will identify areas of the state that face barriers to economic and workforce growth as a result of limited access to broadband services.

“Now more than ever, success in the global economy is contingent on the access and utilization of new technologies,” said Johnson, who also serves as state development director. “The ECom-Ohio project will enable us to determine where we stand in the area of broadband and Internet connectivity for Ohio businesses. With high speed connections at the fingertips of all Ohioans, our state will have an advantage when competing for business investments and further enhancing the skills of our workforce.”

The survey will be conducted by the Ohio Supercomputer Center (OSC), on behalf of the ODOD, and will analyze broadband services and Internet access in all 88 Ohio counties focusing on areas of government, health care, state agencies and key employers. The study will enable the ODOD to determine costs associated with the creation of the statewide, high-tech environment required to recruit business and industry to Ohio and will provide the workforce training necessary to meet Ohio’s future economic development needs.

Findings will also serve as the basis for informed decision-making about potential public/private partnerships that could improve network connectivity in underserved, high-cost areas of the state and promote economic and workforce development through improved access to education and employment opportunities.

In 2000, Ohio became the first state to measure its Internet readiness against a comprehensive set of national benchmarks. This first statewide study evaluated the use and demand for broadband services and assessed the availability of fiber by region, as an indicator of future broadband capability. Results of the 2000 study indicated that 48 percent of Ohio households owned a computer; 43 percent used the Internet; 16 percent purchased goods online; 45 percent avoided e-commerce because of privacy concerns; and 37 percent perceived lack of access to the Internet as a problem. The study also found that while nearly 70 percent of Ohio businesses used computers, only 28 percent utilized the Internet for business opportunities and only 15 percent had a Web site.

Results of the 2000 study, and a follow-on study completed in 2001, will be compared with the 2006 study to determine Ohio’s progress in accessibility and availability of broadband. Since 2000, a number of developments have greatly altered the landscape of broadband access in Ohio, including the state’s Third Frontier Network (TFN), which now connects higher education and the K-12 community to a highly scalable, advanced network. The study is expected to be complete in Autumn 2006.

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