

Broadband in Big Stone County



Upper Minnesota Valley
**REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT
COMMISSION**

Helping Communities Prosper

“Minnesotans have a proud history of innovation,” said Lt. Governor Tina Smith in February 2015. “Ensuring that all Minnesotans have access to high-speed broadband internet is critical to unleashing the next generation of dreamers and innovators. These new infrastructure investments will help Greater Minnesota communities compete in the global economy.”

Big Stone County and Federated Telephone Cooperative Fiber to the Premise Partnership Project

Big Stone County was one of the original MIRC (Minnesota Intelligent Rural Communities) cohort groups with the Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission. With a wide range of projects through that effort, getting local businesses online within the county was a highlight.

Through that effort, Big Stone County established a working relationship with Federated Telephone Cooperative to determine how they could make service available to 1,072 unserved premises across their county.

The Big Stone County broadband infrastructure project cost \$7.92 million to construct. \$4 million of the project came from funds raised through tax abatement bonds and the county loaning the bond proceeds to Federated. The other \$3.92 million came from the Minnesota Border to Border Grant authored by the Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission. The final project ended up almost \$1 million over budget due to the underestimating of prevailing wages needed for the project construction and the extra costs of hand digging in fiber along the narrow band of

infrastructure corridor along Big Stone Lake. The additional funding was provided by Federated Telephone and brought the total cost to almost \$9 million.

The Minnesota Office of Broadband Development funding was established by the Minnesota State Legislation in 2014 to facilitate rural broadband projects.

In addition to connecting local businesses and providing local online learning opportunities, 45 percent of the new service drops with this project were to farming operations that now can make use of high-tech agricultural and agribusiness applications.

