

Broadband in the City of Watson, Chippewa County and SW Lac qui Parle County



Upper Minnesota Valley
**REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT
COMMISSION**

Helping Communities Prosper

*Kyle Jones, Watson resident and owner of Firestorm Films, states in his testimonial of support that the lack of internet service available causes him to drive to the home of his daughter in the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area in order to transmit large media files overseas to business clients in Scotland. He states that as a result of this project he **would be able to transmit files, increase productivity and avoid unnecessary travel** as well as keep up to date on important business information, and correspond and connect with colleagues and business contacts*

Farmers Mutual Telephone Company, City of Watson and SW Lac qui Parle County Fiber Connectivity Project

Farmers Mutual Telephone Company (FMTC) worked in partnership with the UMVRDC and the City of Watson to bring fiber broadband connectivity to their city, while also including a small unserved area in Lac qui Parle county, furthering its position as one of the best-connected counties in the state. Through this strong public, private partnership approximately 156 locations that had no real access would now be connected to fast, reliable fiber broadband.

The City of Watson and SW Lac qui Parle County broadband infrastructure project will cost \$1.55 million to construct. The City of Watson's cash share of

the project was \$400K and they considered bonding then loaning the funds to Farmers but in the end they had a building, a small section of fiber from their cable tv and some land that Farmers needed to complete the project and sold the fiber and building for \$1 and completed a 99 year lease on the land to serve as their share of the project. \$760.5K will come from a Minnesota Border to Border Grant authored by the Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission. The remaining \$791.5K project cost will be borne by FMTC.

The Minnesota Office of Broadband Development funding was established by

Minnesota State Legislation in 2016 to facilitate rural broadband projects. The grant was awarded in late 2017.

Broadband is identified as a high priority in the regional strategic plan and will help support job creation and economic prosperity throughout the region. Numerous businesses responded through letters of support that this will help them create jobs and be more competitive. New jobs related to farming, home-based start-ups, commercial expansions, and new non-employers are all possible with broadband infrastructure, along with improved accessibility for all residents to health care and education opportunities.

