



Board of Mahoning County Commissioners

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County Commissioners

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NEWS RELEASE

BOARD OF MAHONING COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COMMIT \$1.5 MIL TO FUND BROADBAND IN RURAL MAHONING COUNTY

*As the regional broadband convener, Eastgate chosen to manage
the implementation of the ConnectMahoning project.*

CANFIELD, June 26, 2023 – The Board of Mahoning County Commissioners (BMCC) unanimously agree to allocate \$1.5 million of American Rescue Plan (ARPA) funds to expand broadband services to underserved portions of rural Mahoning County. The agreement will be ratified at the June 26, 2023 BMCC meeting to be held in Austintown Township at 5:00 p.m. The money will fund a project called ConnectMahoning that will expand broadband infrastructure to the areas most in need. Eastgate Regional Council of Governments will manage the ConnectMahoning project by issuing a broadband RFP, selecting the provider, and overseeing the implementation of the system. The BMCC will award the money to Eastgate at a broadband check presentation at 2:00pm on June 26 at the Ohio State Extension Services office in Canfield. Additional information about the project will be provided at that time.

Covid-19 brought greater awareness of the importance of broadband for residents and businesses in Mahoning County with the increased need and reliance upon on-line learning, telehealth, remote work, and more. “It became apparent that in today’s digital economy, some rural parts of our county found themselves on the wrong side of the digital divide and we wanted to help,” said BMCC Chair David Ditzler. “As the recognized broadband convener for our region, the Commissioners chose to partner with Eastgate on ConnectMahoning in order to leverage their knowledge and project management expertise.”

Eastgate conducted a Regional Broadband Feasibility Study in 2021 and has been using the results from that study as the blueprint to improve broadband throughout the region, which includes Ashtabula, Trumbull, and Mahoning Counties. After the Feasibility Study, Eastgate conducted a deeper dive into Mahoning County to identify the specific communities in rural Mahoning County most underserved. Once it was identified that Springfield, Goshen, Milton, Jackson, and Smith Townships are the communities most in need for broadband, Eastgate developed a plan to address that need. Therefore, the money from the BMCC that will fund the ConnectMahoning implementation and will initially target areas within those five townships.

"I want to thank the Commissioners. At Eastgate, we value the high trust partnership that we have with the Board of Mahoning County Commissioners," said Eastgate Executive Director Jim Kinnick, "Having completed our study and developed our plan, we're now excited about bringing broadband to those underserved areas as we implement ConnectMahoning."

The broadband check and program presentation will be conducted:

Date: June 26, 2023

Time: 2:00-4:00

**Location: OSU Extension, Mahoning County Office,
490 South Broad St, Canfield, OH 44406**

The mission of the Board of Mahoning County Commissioners Government is to improve health, safety, and welfare of its citizens to make the county a desirable place to live, work, and raise children. By insuring economical, superior service to our citizens, County Government will insure the promotion of orderly growth for the economic health and safety of its citizens.

Eastgate Regional Council of Governments is a voluntary association of local governments in Northeast Ohio, Ashtabula County, Mahoning County, Trumbull County, and all cities, villages, and townships in the counties are members. Although our members are unique, they share many common interests. Eastgate brings communities within the region together to create a unified voice in areas such as transportation, water and air quality, broadband and other local infrastructure projects.

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