

## Building Broadband to Build the Economy

Utah continues to expand its impressive broadband infrastructure so that businesses continue to expand Utah's economy.

By Hillary Bowler

**“Infrastructure” used to refer only to roadways, water access and other basics for building, thriving and connecting.**

To connect in the 21st century, however, private and commercial construction projects look for a new kind of infrastructure: broadband. In Utah, builders are in luck: fiber, DSL, cable, fixed wireless,—the state has it all. According to Akamai Technologies' 2014 State of the Internet Report, the Beehive State now boasts the fastest internet speeds in the western United States, ranking sixth overall nationally. Utah's award-winning broadband infrastructure supports many key sectors including education, public safety, transportation and economic development.



Broadband infrastructure is a critical component of highway projects in Utah. Since the I-15 Reconstruction project prior to the 2002 Olympics, UDOT has woven broadband access into its rights-of-way along state road projects.

Big name companies from Boeing to PluralSight and Adobe have set up shop in Utah and made stellar investments in the state. They, like many others, have been attracted to the state's low corporate taxes, low energy costs, highly-educated workforce and advanced broadband infrastructure.

It seems like the state's various strong broadband providers have exciting new developments to share on a daily basis. AT&T, Verizon, Sprint, T-Mobile and Strata Networks have all launched 4G cellular service in Utah over the past few years, and Comcast continues to be a major provider in Utah. Just recently both Century Link and Google announced major improvements and extensions of service in the state. For example, Salt Lake City will join Provo by welcoming Google Fiber. UTOPIA (Utah Telecommunication Open Infrastructure Agency) also offers gigabyte speeds at extremely competitive prices for the handful of cities on board.

When it comes to broadband, the whole state looks good. Rural Utah is just as often the beneficiary of fast Internet speeds and multiple connectivity options. Within the past year, members of the Utah Rural Telecom Association have made major upgrades in many areas of the state including Vernal, Morgan, Fairview, Hanksville, Tremonton and Panguitch.

The Utah Broadband Outreach Center, a program within the Governor's Office of Economic Development (GOED), works with more than 50 broadband providers who can supply premium services for all types of businesses in both urban and rural areas. Rural Utah is no longer isolated by any



Hillary Bowler

means, and one secret lies in the work of the Utah Department of Transportation.

We are always building roads—and putting them *everywhere*. Since the I-15 reconstruction around the 2002 Olympics, UDOT has woven broadband access into its rights-of-way along every state roadway project. It's not just Salt Lake City. Everywhere from Vernal to Richfield to Cedar City gets a taste of the “Fastest Internet in the West.”

“Companies want to know that they'll have everything they need to grow here,” said Val Hale, executive director of GOED. “Utah really offers the full package statewide—and crucial to that deal is our extensive broadband. We've long been an economic leader, and broadband infrastructure is one of our best-kept secrets.”

It's a “secret” that the Broadband Outreach Center works to spread. In addition to their work with providers, the center works closely with city and county leaders to implement policies and practices similar to UDOT's to make

all of the statewide road infrastructure a literal conduit for broadband infrastructure. The center works closely with regional planning groups, community leaders and developers on effective strategies to encourage the installation and improvements to the high-speed broadband services and infrastructure. More specifically the center encourages installing broadband simultaneously with other utilities, reducing overall cost dramatically.

“Developers can play a crucial role in helping residents and businesses access high-speed services by working with broadband providers early on in the construction process,” said Kelleigh Cole, director of the Broadband Outreach Center. “Including broadband in the planning stages and wiring homes and businesses during the construction process is a vital step in creating smarter communities.”

Utah’s economic development team is continually developing strategies to

assist new and existing businesses in finding locations with access to critical infrastructure. One strategy is the creation of two websites designed to provide comprehensive infrastructure and real estate information. In the private sector, GOED’s partner, the Economic Development Corporation of Utah, manages UtahSureSites.com, a valuable tool for business site selectors and commercial developers to explore the state’s existing commercial real estate options.

In addition to UtahSureSites.com, the Broadband Outreach Center recently launched locate.utah.gov, an interactive mapping site that allows users to explore the state’s broadband availability, along with information on utilities, transportation, workforce and lifestyle. In short, searching companies will be able to view where they can get the best fiber connections and the best skiing (and locate hospitals if the skiing created a need).

Locate.utah.gov and UtahSureSites.com

are unique and effective, providing developers and business officials both inside and outside of the state with exceptional resources at their fingertips. Beyond online viewing, the sites allow users to evaluate potential locations and print customized reports with detailed summaries of potential locations. Online resources like these make it easier and easier for businesses and developers to build in Utah—and to build smart.

GOED has always worked hard to lay whatever foundations necessary to keep Utah on top economically. The state’s broadband infrastructure is an investment that’s already paying off. We look forward to more growth in the years to come. ■

*Hillary Bowler is a communication specialist for Utah GOED. For more information about the Broadband Outreach Center and for access to data on all services offered in Utah, visit [broadband.utah.gov](http://broadband.utah.gov).*




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