

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINNESOTA STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES**

BOARD INFORMATION ITEM

**CAMPUS SHOWCASE:
PINE CITY FIBER OPTIC BACKBONE**

SUMMARY

Affordable broadband telecommunications is a critical issue for the future competitiveness of rural America. Communities with it will be more likely to attract technology-based companies and high-wage jobs - - those without will struggle to do so. Further, existing companies in rural communities are finding that broadband is critical to their continued viability in a marketplace that increasingly relies on the Internet for retail and business-to-business commerce and collaboration. Residents, schools and students in communities without broadband will find themselves left behind in their ability to take advantage of the full range of personal and education applications possible now and in the future through this modality. A decade ago, the Digital Divide separated those who had access to the Internet from those who did not. Now, that balancing point has shifted. The “haves” are those who can access affordable broadband – the “have nots” are those who can’t.

The Pine City fiber optic backbone is a collaborative effort to provide our small, rural Minnesota community with this critical resource. It is the result of a public-private partnership between Pine Technical College, the City of Pine City, Pine County, Lakeside Medical Center, Pine City Public Schools and the East Central Minnesota Educational Cable Cooperative (a consortium of 12 area school districts using high bandwidth connectivity to provide interactive television and data communications services).

The backbone currently consists of 108 strands of single-mode fiber optic cable installed through the downtown under Main Street (Highway 61) in Pine City, MN, with the hub at Pine Technical College. Construction is underway this summer to extend that backbone to the city’s industrial park and along its other major highway corridors. At present, all the public sector partners are using the fiber for their connectivity, and private sector industrial and business customers will be brought on-line in July. Other discussions are under for improved last-mile connectivity to residential customers through a variety of technologies.

Presenters:

Robert Musgrove, President, Pine Technical College

Ken Ries, Chief Information Officer, Pine Technical College

Lynda Woulfe, City Administrator, City of Pine City

Jane Robbins, Mayor, City of Pine City

Steve Hallan, Executive Director, East Central Minnesota Educational Cable Cooperative

Date Presented to the Board of Trustees: July 21, 2004