

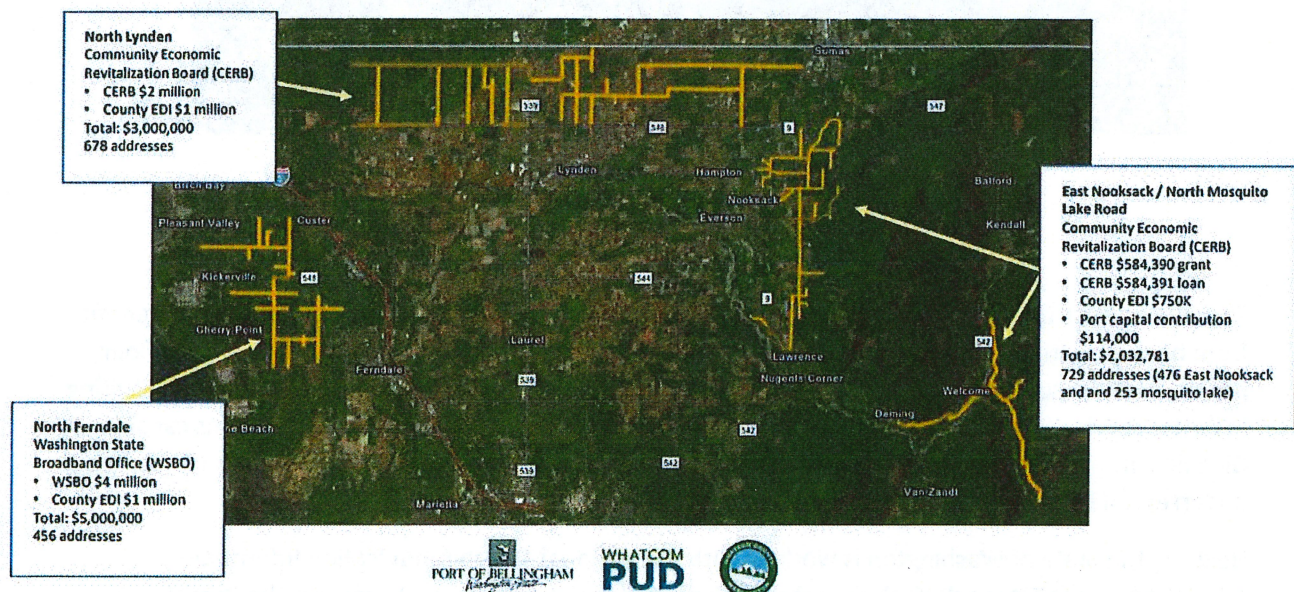


Fellow Community Members,

The Port of Bellingham, Whatcom PUD, and Whatcom County have formed a partnership to support the extension of broadband infrastructure to unserved and underserved areas in Whatcom County. We want to give you an update on our progress.

The Port of Bellingham has been awarded just over \$10 million in grants to build fiber broadband that is wired directly to over 2,000 homes and businesses. These new broadband infrastructure projects will serve rural Whatcom residents in areas stretching from East Nooksack to North Lynden to Custer.

PORT OF BELLINGHAM BROADBAND PROJECT AREAS



Grant funding came from three different sources: the Community Economic Revitalization Board (CERB), the Washington State Broadband Office (WSBO), and Whatcom County. These projects involved many collaborators and partners - from agencies funding the work, to design and engineering firms, to the companies which supplied the fiber and other materials for the projects. Construction is currently underway with initial customers already being served in the East Nooksack area. All construction should be complete by 2025. If residents in this area would like to get connected to fiber broadband they should reach out to the contacts at the end of this press release.

The Whatcom PUD was awarded a \$3.15 million grant from the Washington State Broadband Office with \$350,000 in matching grants from Whatcom County—and is also awaiting confirmation of a \$250,000 direct capital allocation from the State Legislature. This mix of funding will allow the PUD to build open-access fiber that is wired directly to over 1,200 unserved homes in Point Roberts. The PUD is currently finalizing grant contracts and will soon begin design and material procurement.

WHATCOM PUD BROADBAND PROJECT AREA



WHATCOM
PUD



The fiber infrastructure for both the Port and the PUD is open access--meaning consumers can benefit from having multiple providers of broadband services operating on these systems. Open access fiber programs allow consumers choice and encourages competition between broadband providers resulting in better services for community members. Both the Port and the PUD projects use systems capable of Gigabit symmetric service and beyond. All customers included in these projects were either unserved or underserved by modern broadband service.

Next up, the State of Washington is working with the National Telecommunication Information Administration (NTIA) to draft the necessary plans, policies and programs to receive the Broadband, Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) funding. Washington was allocated nearly \$1.23 billion in BEAD funding based on our unserved and underserved populations. This funding will be disbursed to local agencies over a five-year period starting in 2025. Both the Port and the PUD will apply for BEAD funding and hope to have many additional fiber broadband projects in the years to come. Whatcom PUD recently developed a mapping tool to help constituents identify broadband availability. Click [HERE](#) to access the tool.

Lastly, if you have any detailed questions about the Port or PUD broadband projects, please visit our broadband information pages or contact us directly.

<https://www.portofbellingham.com/982/Broadband>

<https://www.pudwhatcom.org/services/broadband-program/>

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Thanks to all the people at the federal, state and local levels that have brought these projects to reality.

Sincerely,



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Rob Fix

Executive Director, Port of Bellingham

