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September 16, 2010

RE: Broadband Survey Participation Requested in Belmont County
Contact: Sue Douglass, Bel.Co. DOD/CIC, 740-695-9678

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(St.Clairsville,OH) The Belmont County Department of Development Community Improvement Corporation (DOD/CIC) is seeking information from county businesses about their broadband needs. As a member of the Ohio Mid-Eastern Government Association (OMEGA), the DOD/CIC is providing them with a list of business locations and specifics which will be applied to the plans for the approved Connect Appalachia Broadband program. Sue Douglass, DOD/CIC executive director and OMEGA board member, attended the most recent OMEGA meeting where the broadband presentation was made.

Any Belmont County business interested in new or improved broadband service is asked to contact the DOD/CIC, before the end of October, with their business name, location address, and a brief description of the business which may include reasons for broadband access. This is a voluntary activity and does not guarantee acquisition of service. But it is important for the county to identify the geographical locations and the broadband needs of the business community if there is any chance service areas can be extended. Already listed in the plans are the Fox Commerce Industrial Park and the proposed industrial park in Barnesville.

“Now is the time for businesses to identify their needs”, said OMEGA Executive Director Greg DiDonato.

Tom Reid, Reid Consulting, who is developing the plans, emphasized this service “will be tailored to our region”, and it has unprecedented support and key partnerships. The proposed fiber optic system of rings provides increased capacity with reliable and resilient service.

With the recent approval of the federally funded broadband program, Belmont County became part of the Connecting Appalachian Ohio Middle Mile initiative, which will provide high-capacity broadband services to 34 Ohio counties. Construction is expected to begin in early 2011.

The National Telecommunications Infrastructure Administration (NTIA) awarded Chillicothe-based Horizon Telecom the \$66.4 million contract which

is 70% of the \$94.9 million project. Horizon is providing the 30% match monies.

“The cooperation of our local business community will allow us to take full advantage of this great opportunity, which is the best chance we have had to date to secure better access to the internet system”, said Douglass. “The more we can identify sites and needs, the more likely we will be successful. Along with Don Pickenpaugh, county GIS director, we are working directly with Reid Consulting and OMEGA”.

The DOD/CIC also is completing a separate broadband survey for OMEGA and providing Reid Consulting with additional information for the project.

Businesses may call the DOD/CIC at 740-695-9678, visit the office at 117 East Main Street, St.Clairsville, or go to the website www.belmontdod.com to submit their information.

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