METHOW VALLEY

## *Fiber Project Update from OCEC/Methownet*

We want to provide timely, transparent updates to you as we strive to follow through on providing a robust internet connection to everyone within our service area.  Our mission is to ensure all OCEC members have access to high-speed internet.

## Project Update

The OCEC and Methownet team are working to line up equipment and contractors to start groundwork this 2024 summer season.

Due to the geographic isolation and remote nature of the project area in the Methow Valley, a fiber network build is not economically feasible without funding from grants or other federal/state programs. Our goal, to provide a competitive, affordable service to everyone, requires us to keep the project cost within this funding budget. Unfortunately, the cost to build out to the initial project area increased substantially above the initial cost estimate submitted in our grant application, and we must scale back the initial scope of the project. Don't worry, we have a plan to connect everyone who signed up. It will just take us a little longer than originally planned.

The Washington State Broadband Office has the goal to build out broadband infrastructure to meet the ambitious statewide goals of 150 Mbps symmetrical to all businesses and residences by 2028 and has allotted $1.23 billion dollars for broadband expansion. We plan to continue to apply for state and federal funding to meet that goal for you.

## Current action plan

- We've reduced the current scope of the project to fit available funds.

- The current scope will focus on building a mainline backbone, with serviceable connections along that line.

- Updated project maps are under revision and will be made available as soon as completed

- We will connect as many people as possible with the available funding, build strategically for future connections, and continue to apply for broadband grant programs to bring fiber internet service to the OCEC service area.

## What's Next?

The overall cost to build out the entire service area is in excess of $35 million.

Our progress will be determined by where we're able to secure grant funding and the amount of member interest in an area. The more interest we receive from each neighborhood, the sooner we can expand to that area and show community support in grant applications. Encourage your neighbors to visit https://okanogancountyconnect.com to fill out their own form and add their address to the list of potential subscribers.

We are looking to build the main fiber lines over a 5-year period. Certain areas of our territory have specific grant funding available based on preferred grant scoring such as location, population demographics, and population density. Our goal is to ensure all members have access to reliable, high-speed internet services and plan to achieve that goal through aggressive pursuit of grants to lower our cost of building the network. We appreciate your continued support of building this long-term valuable community asset and look forward to providing reliable, member-focused service to you in the near future.