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VAN BUREN COUNTY BEGINS FIRST STEP IN BROADBAND EXPANSION EFFORTS

PAW PAW, Mich.- Efforts to map broadband availability in Van Buren County at the parcel level are slated to begin April 4; this effort is the culmination of many months of work and an essential first step in ensuring broadband access is made available to every home and business in Van Buren County.

In January 2022, the Van Buren County Board of Commissioners voted to allocate \$7 million of the County's nearly \$14.6 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to support the expansion of broadband access in Van Buren County. To ensure the judicious allocation of the ARPA funds, the Board of Commissioners approved a contract with [DCS Technology Design](#) to develop a GIS-based map that will identify individual parcels that are served, underserved, or unserved in terms of internet access and speeds. Areas identified as being unserved and underserved will be given priority for receiving ARPA funds that support of broadband expansion.

"DCS Technology will be driving down more than 1,300 miles of roads in the County to map roughly 50,000 individual parcels," says Frank Hardester, Van Buren County Administrator. "This is an intense process, but it is essential to having a complete picture of who in our community has internet access and who still needs it."

Employees of DCS Technology Design will be actively mapping the County through the end of June. During this time, residents can expect to see vehicles equipped with safety flashers and "Broadband Survey" signage on the sides with the company name. They will make frequent stops as they document each area and may stop and walk some areas to locate buried systems or cables in easements.

"There is no single data source that is accurate to the individual parcel, and most of the public data is overstated with an accuracy rate of under 50% in many areas," said Chris Scharrer, Director of OSP Planning at DCS Technology Design. "It is not uncommon for us to find homes that have been told they can't get service, but we find that the local service provider does in fact have access available. More often though, we find homes and businesses that truly have no access, but are reported to be in a serviceable area, which has excluded them from current funding programs. Sometimes these unserviceable homes are right in the middle of served areas. This is what surveying and confirming each address will correct."

A final report of survey findings is expected to be delivered early July and will be made available online. Those interested in learning more about the County's broadband expansion efforts can learn more [here](#).

"Broadband access levels the playing field between urban and rural communities," said Zach Morris, Executive Director of Market Van Buren. "The reality is, many of our Van Buren County neighbors are missing out on educational resources, access to healthcare, and remote work opportunities because

they do not have high-speed internet access. The more homes and businesses we can get connected to the internet, the better off our community and residents will be.”

About Van Buren County

Van Buren County was founded in 1829 and named after Martin Van Buren before he was elected president. The County’s population is roughly 75,000, and residents enjoy the County’s 14 miles of Lake Michigan shoreline, 300 inland lakes, and many local rivers for fishing, kayaking, water sports, and more. The County is comprised of 29 municipalities, including townships, cities, and villages. For more information about Van Buren County, visit www.vanburencountymi.gov, follow us on Twitter @VanBurenCoMI, “like” us on Facebook @VanBurenCountyMI, or follow us on [LinkedIn](#).

About DCS Technology Design

DCS Technology Design was founded in 2008 with the goal to offer a level of telecommunications engineering and technical expertise that sets industry standards; we are driven to achieve a level of accuracy and excellence that others follow. Because of the 2020 pandemic, DCS's heritage of over four decades in designing and building cable and fiber networks, across municipalities of all sizes, has been re-focused on the challenge of getting Broadband access to all Rural America. Our Mission is to help municipalities develop clear-cut technical programs that are innovative, yet practical, to bring reliable high-speed Broadband to 100% of its homes and communities through existing and new technologies, that are sustainable well into the future. For more information, visit www.dcstechnology.com.

About Market Van Buren

Market Van Buren, a subsidiary of Kinexus Group, is an economic development organization dedicated to the advancement of economic growth in Cass and Van Buren counties. The organization was formed to bring the public and private sectors together to advance the economic interests of Cass and Van Buren counties. For more information, visit www.marketvanburen.org, follow us on Twitter @MarketVanBuren, or “like” us on Facebook @MarketVanBuren.

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