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## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:**

### **Midwest Fiber Networks LLC's Model for Bringing a Citywide Wireless Data Network to Milwaukee**

#### **What is the Midwest Fiber Networks model for a citywide network in Milwaukee?**

Midwest Fiber Networks LLC would build and maintain a citywide wireless data network—**at no cost to taxpayers**. In fact, Midwest Fiber would pay fees to the city to lease rights of way on city-owned facilities such as buildings, streetlights, traffic signals and underground conduit on which to place wireless network hardware. Midwest Fiber already has similar licenses with the city and area utilities as part of private networks the company has built, so any agreement with the city would be an expansion of an existing relationship.

#### **Will building or maintaining the network cost anything to taxpayers?**

No. Midwest Fiber's model would build the network without public financing. In fact, the company would pay additional fees to the city and area utilities for the rights of way to place network hardware on additional city- and utility-owned property. This is unlike Wi-Fi models in other cities that would require public financing to build the network infrastructure.

#### **Would this be an exclusive agreement?**

No. Any other company would be able to negotiate with the city to create a similar network. Furthermore, Midwest Fiber's model would feature an "open network," meaning any service provider would be able to negotiate with Midwest Fiber to lease bandwidth on our network.

#### **What service providers are involved?**

Midwest Fiber Networks is in the process of negotiating with local, national and international providers who have expressed an interest in leasing bandwidth on the citywide network. Midwest Fiber will make the names of these companies public as agreements are reached.

#### **Who is Midwest Fiber Networks LLC?**

Midwest Fiber is a Milwaukee-based, woman-owned enterprise with a strong record of consistent growth. The company has a core competency in designing, building and maintaining large-scale fiber optic and wireless data networks for

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prominent businesses and public entities. Midwest Fiber's affiliate, CableCom LLC, is well-versed in all aspects of building network infrastructure. Together, both companies provide cost-effective, alternative technology highways, for private business enterprise and public users. Midwest Fiber's three principal owners bring more than 30 years of combined experience in network communications.

### **How would the city and its residents benefit?**

The economic development benefits would be numerous. First, building the network would result in the creation of new jobs. These positions are expected to range from high-level engineering roles, to entry-level construction jobs. Midwest Fiber is in discussions with several community groups to establish programs for recruitment, training and job mentoring—all of which would create new opportunities for minorities and women with Midwest Fiber Networks.

City residents would also benefit by having access to affordable, high-speed Internet connectivity. The network would provide service across all of Milwaukee, and deliver access to areas of the city that currently lack strong broadband coverage. Additionally, more Internet service options would mean more competition—which in turn would result in better quality and lower prices all around.

Businesses would benefit in a number of ways. The network would create unique opportunities for small businesses to send and receive data in the field. This presents obvious benefits to contractors and other businesses whose representatives use laptop computers and wireless devices to transact with their home offices from remote locations around the city. Additionally, Milwaukee's leadership in deploying one of the nation's first citywide Wi-Fi networks should make the city more attractive to forward-thinking businesses considering relocation.

### **What would Midwest Fiber get out of this model?**

Midwest Fiber would build and maintain the network, leasing bandwidth to service providers who would provide broadband, or high-speed, Internet access to users. Midwest Fiber's revenues would come from contracts with these service providers.

### **How did this idea come about?**

Midwest Fiber saw an opportunity to expand its working relationship with the city

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and approached Mayor Tom Barrett and members of the Common Council with a request for additional facilities access in order to build a citywide network. Mayor Barrett and several Milwaukee Common Council members have been strong supporters of the "Milwaukee Wireless Initiative," which aims to place the city at the forefront of wireless communications. Because Midwest Fiber is a Milwaukee-based business that shares the city's commitment to bridging the "digital divide" by providing low-cost wireless access to lower-income residents, Midwest Fiber's model has been met with enthusiasm by city leaders.

### **What must be done to set up the network?**

First, Midwest Fiber would need city Common Council approval for any additional agreements to lease rights of way. Then, the company would continue building the fiber infrastructure and network of wireless transmitters.

### **When would the network be up and running?**

Midwest Fiber estimates a lead time of six to 12 months, depending on the time it takes to finalize an agreement with the city. In light of Midwest Fiber's existing agreements with the city and area utilities and the company's already-deployed infrastructure, company leaders believe Midwest Fiber could deploy a citywide Wi-Fi network 18-24 months faster than any other provider.

### **What would it cost for a user to access the network?**

Monthly access fees are the subject of ongoing negotiations, but are expected to be at or below market rates for most consumers. For lower-income residents, Midwest Fiber's goal is to contract with service providers who are willing to offer service at dramatically reduced rates in an effort to address the "digital divide" in this country.

### **Is any other city exploring a similar model for a wireless network?**

Several other cities are pursuing agreements to set up citywide wireless networks. Many of these would require public funding to build the network; others have corporate sponsors.

### **How secure will the network be?**

The entire wireless network would be enabled for WPA (Wireless Protected Access) security, meaning users can access the network in a way in which all of their upstream and downstream data would be completely encrypted. Users would also have an option to access the network in an unencrypted mode. The

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network would support VPN (Virtual Private Networking), which enables users to use their own security products if they prefer.

### **What would people need to do to access the network?**

Consumers would need to contract with a participating Internet Service Provider for high-speed Internet service through the wireless network.

### **What is Wi-Fi?**

Wi-Fi is short for wireless fidelity, communications technology that meets the wireless standard certified by the Wireless Ethernet Compatibility Alliance. All products certified as Wi-Fi by WECA are compatible, so any computer with Wi-Fi technology can access the Internet via the network wherever it is available.

### **How fast will downloads and uploads be?**

The initial rollout would offer symmetric service, which provides approximately 1 Megabit per second upstream and downstream access. Symmetric service is advantageous in that downlink and uplink times are equally fast. With DSL and cable-based services, uplink speeds tend to be significantly slower than downlink speeds.

### **Would the transmitters be eyesores in the city?**

The network would cause no more disruption to the cityscape than, say, the fire department communications boxes atop some traffic signals. The transmitter nodes that would be used for the network are no larger than a grapefruit.