Galion ready to get hooked up to the world

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Galion is a step closer to getting its broadband up and running.

Gov. Ted Strickland thinks broadband is a big enough issue to take it state-wide. The goal of his broad-band council: Affordable broadband in all 88 counties in Ohio. The state is looking for places with easy access to broadband and ready to go - such as Galion.

City traffic lights are on the broadband system and it is used for internal city use such as utility to utility, but the fiber ring, for the most part, is dark.
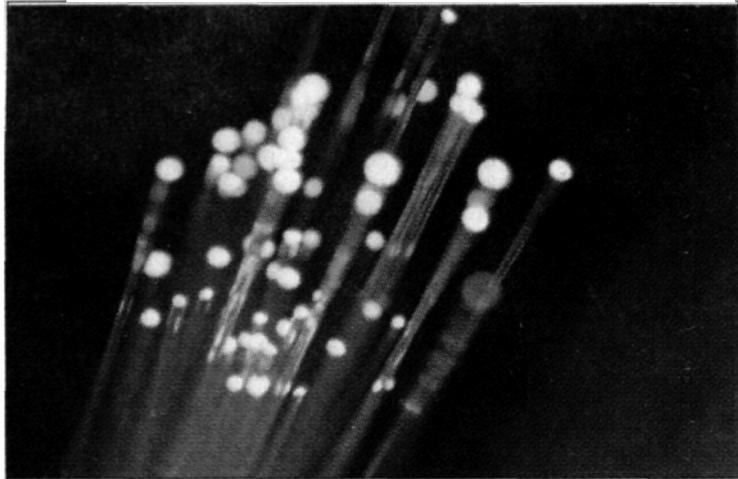
"Right now the fiber ring is like a multi-lane highway without any cars driving on it," said Dave Williamson, director for the Crawford County Economic Development Partnership, "the potential is not being maximized."

Galion getting connected to the outside world would mean:

• The creation of a wire-less mesh throughout the city.

• The whole community would be connected (free wireless access at Heise Park, for example.)

• Broadband would be available to the community and business at an affordable price.

• Galion could be marketed as a place with afford-able broadband.

• Galion could house a major data storage facility.

The project will be funded by public and private funds.

With the state-wide initia-tive trying to find pockets of infra structure to piece together, Galion is in a posi-tion to get state help because 90 percent of the broadband project is in place.

With all the work done on the broadband project before 2004, with all the work done by the consortium and with LaMar Wyse being appointed to the governor's broadband council the city is well positioned.

"The city of Galion began construction of the Galion Fiber Ring in 2001," said Wyse in a letter to the broad-band council, "and was 90 percent complete prior to loss of local funding due to a state of fiscal emergency for the city. Since then, no mar-ket-driven, private-sector solutions have surfaced. A consortium made up of a cross section of business and city leaders was formed with the goal to complete the Galion Fiber Ring, connect it to the outside world, and provide either direct-fiber or wireless connection to busi-ness and residential users in the Galion region.

"The consortium was also developing a vision for another phase to include staged expansion of the broadband beyond the Galion Ring through either fiber or wireless to the Bucyrus and Crestline com-munities and, in time, a sec-ond connection to the outside world via a looped route, which would provide more service contacts and redundancy. This vision was part of an initiative to attempt to obtain funding sources. Funding to com-plete the ring and connect it to the outside world is beyond the financial capa-bility of the city and the local businesses."

The goal and hope of the consortium is for the state to recognize the potential in Galion and grant funding to further the project.

The city made a visionary decision when they installed the fiber ring. Now that vision will pay big divi-dends.

SUBMITTED PHOTO
Galion sits on the brink of seeing the vision of wireless expansion.