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## Proposal looks at Internet access

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A Wichita communications company has offered a proposal through the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act that would provide statewide broadband access to the 1.5 million Kansans who are without.

John Smith, manager of Pixius Communications LLC, discussed Wednesday before the Governor's Agricultural Advisory Board the consequences of the fact that more than 50 percent of Kansans do not have access to broadband Internet.

The proposed solution uses fixed wireless technology to provide statewide service at a cost of \$756 per square mile, significantly less than fiber optic or satellite technologies. Pixius Communications said fiber optic technology costs \$70,000 per square mile.

Agribusiness cannot benefit from information available on the Internet and rural Kansans will not benefit from advances in education and medicine without access to broadband service, said a Pixius Communications news release.

There also is a need for public agencies, such as emergency services, to improve radio coverage, which would be supported by an increase in multi-use communications towers.

The American Reinvestment and Recovery Act provides \$2.5 billion in loan and grant funding to be administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture-Rural Utilities Services and \$4.7 billion in grants to be administered by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration.

The USDA-Rural Utilities Services funding requires that at least 75 percent of the served be rural. Kansas is 80 percent rural by land area and nearly one half of the population lives in an area that is considered to be rural. The National Telecommunications and Information Administration grants assist institutions such as schools, libraries, medical and health care providers and public service agencies.

The Kansas Department of Commerce received 85 applications for funding under the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act, and 22 were given "green-light" recommendation for consideration by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration. Of the 22 proposals, 10 are infrastructure projects, including the Pixius proposal.

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