



Press Contact: NAME Jon Stavney
Title Executive Director
Entity NWCCOG
PHONE 970 471-9050
Email jstavney@nwccog.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ten County Broadband Project Operational

Regional Fiber Network empowers rural, mountain communities to improve broadband

April 7th, 2020 –The Northwest Colorado Council of Governments (NWCCOG) in conjunction with partner communities announces the completion of Critical Broadband Infrastructure through Project THOR, a 400-mile fiber transport network. Project THOR establishes carrier-class connectivity between 14 rural, mountain communities across Northwest Colorado to the NWCCOG Point of Presence in Denver. Because the network creates multiple loops ensuring at least with two routes to Denver, utilizing Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) fiber along I-70 to Glenwood Springs, Highway 9 to Frisco to Breckenridge and a combination of dark fiber and existing fiber services running north through Meeker, Craig, Steamboat Springs and Grand County, it provides resilient broadband service to communities that suffer regular outages at an affordable price. Project partners each have local plans to resell service to end users or leverage THOR for public-private partnerships to do so.

Project THOR meets a need expressed by local partners across Northern Colorado for many years. A number of communities have engaged in local broadband projects but lacked affordable, redundant, high quality middle mile broadband service to support those efforts. Partners include three counties, four municipalities, one local consortium of anchor institutions, one rural electric co-op and a health district which together have contracted with NWCCOG to serve as the network owner for Project THOR. Mammoth Networks is contracted to serve as the network operator. Project THOR is the backbone infrastructure that will enable these partners to provide service to underserved communities directly or through private internet service providers (ISPs). This is especially important as COVID-19 highlights the broadband needs of hospitals, healthcare providers, schools, local governments, public safety and businesses.

Project THOR automatically re-routes traffic when a single fiber cut or other service outages occur, preventing the hours-long service interruptions which have become commonplace in many of the

participating communities. The network is built using world class network equipment from Ciena Corporation which is easily upgradable and provides a platform that can be scaled as demand continues to increase. Local funding for the project has been matched by the Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) through a \$1,000,000 grant for network infrastructure and another \$270,000 grant to fund the first three years of fiber leased from CDOT.

The network enabled by Project THOR infrastructure is now operational and serving each network partner. Optimizing, tuning and increasing network capabilities will continue through 2020 and beyond. NWCCOG continues to provide technical support for local projects through the broadband program across the Northern half of the State of Colorado through member funding matched by DOLA. Though there is no formal timeline, NWCCOG is in discussion with communities geographically situated to connect to Project THOR through a THOR 2.0. Internet service providers and anchor institutions are encouraged to contact the local partners in each community that are utilizing Project THOR for pricing and services to learn how they can leverage the project.

Key Facts about Project THOR:

- Partner communities include: Clear Creek County at Georgetown; Summit County at Silverthorne, Frisco and Breckenridge; Town of Vail at Vail; Town of Eagle at Eagle; City of Glenwood Springs at Glenwood Springs; City of Aspen at Aspen; Rio Blanco County at Meeker; Yampa Valley Electric Association at Craig and Hayden; Northwest Colorado Broadband, a non-profit in Steamboat Springs; as well as Middle Park Health at Kremmling and Granby.
- Over 400 miles of existing publicly and privately owned fiber along with newly constructed fiber to link communities to existing fiber infrastructure.
- All Project THOR infrastructure adheres to open access principles.
- DOLA provided \$1.27 million dollars in funding fully matched by local contributions.
- Project THOR allows open access transport for providers and ISPs to increase competition, availability, and lower broadband service prices in our rural communities.
- Project THOR leverages aggregate usage to offer a regional discounted rate on Internet connectivity to participating communities.
- Network is owned by Northwest Colorado Council of Governments.
- Network is operated by Mammoth Networks.
- Network is governed by the Project THOR steering committee made up of contracted local partners acting as a co-op.
- Annual operating cost of Project Thor is approximately \$1.1 million
- Project is designed for capability up to 400 gigabytes, and has additional expandability
- State partnerships: Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA), Governor's Office of Information Technology Broadband Program Office, CDOT Intelligent Transportation Systems & Network Services (ITS).
- Contact: NWCCOG Broadband Director Nate Walowitz, nwalowitz@nwccog.org, 970-455-1064

Project THOR Quotes:

- With current events increasing our demand for critical communications and remote working, Project THOR is reliably delivering the robust broadband services required by the Aspen community including city, county, school district and emergency operations.
Dr. Paul Schultz, City of Aspen IT Director
- “Whenever there’s a fiber cut, it impacts not only consumers in our towns, but cellphone carriers, public safety centers, schools, hospitals and other critical services. By leveraging the fantastic technical and engineering support, we can offer carrier-grade services, have a real-time view into our network as well as the ability to reroute traffic in the event of an outage.”
- *Nate Walowitz, Regional Broadband Director, NWCCOG*
- “Mammoth is working closely with project partners to create a robust and flexible network architecture that brings open, secure, and redundant broadband at a lower cost to NWCCOG members. A lack of reliable broadband limits economic development throughout many mountain communities, and we believe this project will bring new applications and services to these rural Colorado towns.”
- *Evan Biagi, Vice President of Business Development, Mammoth Networks*
- “Watching my kids, one at Eagle Valley High School and the other home from Colorado State University as well as my wife and I all working from home on video conference calls, and doing on-line work all day long underscores for me how disadvantaged many in our community are who do not have internet service, or robust internet service. COVID 19 shows that this should no longer be a privilege, it must be considered a right, and communities must consider it basic infrastructure.”
- *Jon Stavney, Executive Director, Northwest Colorado Council of Governments*

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