FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 28, 2022
Contact: Meghan Sovey, 608-266-9600
meghan.sovey1@wisconsin.gov

PSC, NTIA Host "Internet for All: Connecting Wisconsin Kick-Off"

Hundreds Gather to Discuss Strategies to Expand Broadband Statewide

WAUSAU, WI – On Tuesday, hundreds attended in-person and virtually the "Internet for All: Connecting Wisconsin Kick-Off" event to learn about efforts to expand broadband access, adoption, and affordability in Wisconsin.

The event, hosted by the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC) and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), brought together stakeholders in Wisconsin from state and local governments, Tribal communities, federal agencies, and industry to discuss coordination on high-speed Internet infrastructure deployment and digital equity efforts as the state prepares to engage in a nine-month planning process for up to $1 billion in federal funding for broadband expansion from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law signed by President Biden in 2021.

"Connecting everyone in our state is going to take teamwork and coordination from all levels of government and a diverse group of stakeholders," said Chairperson Rebecca Cameron Valcq, who spoke as an event panelist about broadband expansion efforts and partnership opportunities. "With broad collaboration and these vital resources, we can truly achieve internet for all."

Event panelists covered a range of topics about the plans to expand broadband statewide and strategies to address the challenges that come along with it. Speakers specifically highlighted data and mapping tools, workforce planning needs and strategies, digital equity and inclusion, and best practices for community collaboration. In the afternoon, the Governor's Task Force on Broadband Access and the PSC's Digital Equity and Inclusion Stakeholder Group held a joint meeting to continue these discussions.

Under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the Internet for All initiative includes critical programs that will provide more than $48 billion to states for infrastructure deployment, skills training, and access to essential technologies. The October 25th "Internet for All" event provided an opportunity for stakeholders to engage with partners and understand the implementation timeline as Wisconsin prepares for federal investment and guidance.

"Under Governor Evers' leadership, Wisconsin has made significant progress to connect unserved and underserved areas of our state to reliable, high-speed broadband," concluded Chairperson Valcq. "Now, with the once-in-a-generation Internet for All investment and established partnerships, we are steps closer to achieving this mission."

Since Governor Evers took office in 2019, Wisconsin has disbursed or committed nearly $300 million towards broadband expansion efforts, including $105 million in federal funding that Gov. Evers specifically directed to this purpose. These investments allocated by Gov. Evers have provided or will provide more than 387,000 homes and businesses access to new or improved services.

Recently, the governor announced an additional $40 million in capital project funding from the federal American Rescue Plan Act would be made available for grants to expand broadband. An announcement detailing when applications for that funding will be made available is forthcoming.

The PSC's Wisconsin Broadband Office recently updated its website to make it even easier for Wisconsinites to stay up to date on the Internet for All initiative and to find community broadband planning resources. The public can find the Community Planning page here or by visiting PSC.wi.gov and clicking on the "Broadband Expansion" tile on the homepage.

###