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Shawnee and State of Illinois Invest in Southern Illinois Broadband Infrastructure

Equality, IL, [Date]– Shawnee Communications (Shawnee), a rural provider of telephone, high-speed internet, and other telecommunications services in seven Southern and Central Illinois counties, today announced the culmination of a public-private partnership with the State of Illinois to expand high-speed internet services to previously underserved and unserved Southern Illinois residents.

Shawnee announced that they would partner with the State of Illinois on a $22 million investment to bring high-speed internet technology infrastructure to customers in Saline, Johnson, and Williamson Counties. Customers in Mitchellsville, Rudement, Buncombe, Vienna, Pulleys Mill and Goreville will receive greatly improved high-speed internet services, delivered by fiber to the home (FTTH) network technology.

Shawnee Communications CEO Mike Grisham stated,*“Shawnee Communications is enthusiastic and prepared to provide more Southern Illinois residents with the best in telecommunications services and fiber-based high-speed internet, and customer service that is second to none. We believe this partnership will continue the legacy that Shawnee has established in Southern Illinois. This partnership brings greater broadband equity, enhanced access to critical health care and employment, and student access to speeds and the reliability necessary for education, especially in these difficult times.”*

The project is a public-private partnership with Shawnee investing nearly $15 million in the project, matched by $7 million from the State of Illinois, allowing Shawnee to deliver high-speed internet services to over 2,550 residents in 6 rural communities. The partnership resulted from Governor JB Pritzker’s $400 million Connect Illinois program funded by the 2019 Capital Development initiative. Connect Illinois aims to deliver high-speed internet services statewide by 2028.

“Under Governor Pritzker’s leadership, the Connect Illinois program sets forth an unprecedented investment over the next three years that will help shore up

infrastructure capable of delivering high speed, reliable broadband to communities across our state for decades to come," said Matt Schmit, Director of the Illinois Office of Broadband. “We’re proud to partner with Shawnee Communications to expand access these digital capabilities to support thousands of working families, businesses, farms and community locations right here in Southern Illinois. This project is the first step as we aim to close the digital divide in our state and to provide all of our communities with the tools they need to succeed in a 21st century economy."

Shawnee's announcement was preceded by the agreement between the State of Illinois and Shawnee to enter into a public, private partnership to bring broadband services to the aforementioned Southern Illinois communities. Shawnee will begin providing service to its first customers under this partnership in 2021 and has committed to completing these projects in 2023.

Shawnee Communications is proud to serve communities throughout Southern Illinois, providing telephone and Internet connectivity to thousands of families and businesses. We are a locally owned company committed to supporting our communities and providing telecommunications services that meet or exceed services available in larger metropolitan areas.