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## **KANSAS BROADBAND MAP WILL SHOW WHERE GAPS EXIST**

MANHATTAN – A new public-private collaborative effort led by Kansas Farm Bureau will result in a detailed statewide mapping process that will lead to new economic and quality of life opportunities for rural Kansans.

Once completed, stakeholders can determine at a glance where gaps exist in broadband Internet service – right down to the street or farm road level.

“When it comes to the future viability of rural life in Kansas, I can’t think of a more important area of work,” said Steve Baccus, an Ottawa County grain farmer who serves as president of Kansas Farm Bureau. “This new, comprehensive mapping process is a vital first step toward ensuring a level playing field in farm country.”

With the map, Kansas will be able to make strategic decisions on how to best take advantage of broadband infrastructure grant dollars recently approved by Congress in the federal economic stimulus package. Stakeholders will use the map to actively promote broadband access across the state to the communities and households not currently served.

“In nearly every respect, bringing broadband Internet service to rural areas of Kansas is akin to rural electrification,” Baccus continued. “That technology changed life on the farm and broadband access will do the same thing.”

The funding for the mapping component will be provided by a partnership collaboration begun by Kansas Farm Bureau and the Information Network of Kansas.

A key player in the collaboration is Connected Nation, a non-profit concern which facilitates public-private partnerships to increase access and use of broadband and related technology. These collaborations will translate into economic and community development, better education, higher quality health care, more efficient public service and improved quality of life.

With funding available through the stimulus package, Kansas now has an opportunity to launch a federally funded state broadband initiative that will ensure the Kansas service map is kept up-to-date over time; produce meaningful county-by-county research on broadband and barriers to access; and launch a comprehensive demand stimulation effort aimed at improving broadband adoption rates throughout the state.

Kansas Farm Bureau represents grassroots agriculture. Established in 1919, this non-profit advocacy organization supports farm families who earn their living in a changing industry.