



# Cherokee County Joins Innovative Broadband Expansion Effort

*Leaders enlist in Connected Texas' Connected program to bridge technology gap, boost economy, seed ground for innovations*

**Media Contact:** Jennifer Cobb  
[jcobb@connectednation.org](mailto:jcobb@connectednation.org)  
(615) 828-1017

**For Immediate Release**  
August 13, 2014

**Rusk, TX** – Cherokee County leaders have enrolled their community in an innovative program that seeks to boost the local economy and quality of life for residents through increased access, adoption, and use of broadband.

On Tuesday, Connected Texas Community Technology Advisor Ron Turner led Cherokee County leaders through the steps of the Connected Community Engagement Program that offers a comprehensive and localized way for communities to bridge the digital divide. The kickoff meeting was held at the Rusk Civic Center with community champions Mike Murray, Rusk city manager, and Rusk Mayor Angela Raiborn on hand to welcome the 15 attendees and to call for participation and support for this endeavor.

“By bringing high-speed Internet to our community, we put our region ahead of the curve,” said Nanette Stephens, East Texas Council of Governments project director. “Technology puts our state on the road to success by fostering new jobs, new opportunities, and increased economic development.”

Cherokee County kickoff meeting attendees were given an overview of the county’s broadband inventory, presented with the Connected program goals and objectives, and then given an outline of team needs.

The action items identified during the meeting include exploring opportunities for improvement not only in rural areas but also in the cities of Cherokee County. The next step is data collection for the assessment portion of the program.

Cherokee County is one of 23 counties that are working with the ETCOG and Connected Texas to develop and complete a comprehensive, regional broadband blueprint for the underserved and unserved areas of the 23-county region. The Connected Community Engagement Program entails building a comprehensive Technology Action Plan for developing a technology-ready community by reviewing the landscape, developing regional partnerships, establishing local teams, and conducting a thorough community assessment.

**Photo:** From left, Rusk Mayor Angela Raiborne, Alto Mayor Jimmy Allen, East Texas Council of Government Executive Director David Cleveland, and Alto Council Member Carey Palmer at the conclusion of Tuesday's Connected kickoff meeting at the Rusk Civic Center.

###

**About Connected Texas:** Connected Texas, the Texas division of Connected Nation, is a public-private partnership, funded by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration and the State of Texas, working with telecommunications providers, business and community leaders, information technology companies, researchers, public agencies, libraries and universities to enable economic growth and a better way of life through improved broadband Internet access, adoption, and use. For more information visit: <http://www.connectedtx.org>.

Also follow Connected Texas on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

Connected Nation developed the Connected Community Engagement Program to help guide a community through an



assessment of its overall broadband and technology status. Connected certified communities have measurably demonstrated their proficiency for effective Access, Adoption, and Use of broadband-supported technologies. Connected Nation through its partners provides a national platform for recognizing those communities that excel across these important benchmarks. Funded by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), this effort is part of the State Broadband Initiative.