

W.Va. city wants to be test site for fast Internet

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(AP) -- Mayor Kim Wolfe has trotted out an old campaign prop to help the city's effort to win over Google and become a test site for the company's ultra-fast broadband experiment.

Wolfe, a former mounted police officer, says a video showing him riding a horse slowly through the streets of Huntington should debut soon on YouTube. Wolfe has used the horse prop before, including during his unsuccessful 2006 congressional campaign.

This time Wolfe aims to show just how slow and out-of-date Internet service is in West Virginia's second-largest city.

Google is giving interested communities until March 26 to apply to be test sites for a [broadband network](#) capable of delivering information at speeds of up to 1 [gigabit](#). That's 50 to 300 times faster than current DSL, cable and fiber-optic networks in use today.

"I think it's of tremendous importance to us," Wolfe said, "with the opportunity of boosting the [technology infrastructure](#), it'd be a great selling point for high-tech companies."

Cities from Duluth, Minn., to Baltimore feel the same and many have turned to [YouTube](#) videos to attract attention.

West Virginia University sent out an appeal for residents to submit videos as part of its joint "Google Gig" effort with the city of

Morgantown.

"Video is the name of the game these days," Mridul Gautam, a WVU vice president, said in a statement. "This is a fantastic opportunity for people to be creative and send a message to Google that Morgantown wants a Gig."

Huntington is also working with its biggest educational institution, Marshall University. Marshall President Stephen Kopp, Wolfe and William Smith, superintendent of Cabell County schools, are all speaking out in favor of the city's effort.

Smith envisions the [Google](#) network helping public schools in a variety of ways. For instance, fast Internet makes it easier to have online lessons, so a child who gets stuck doing homework can turn to a teacher rather than a parent who's less familiar with the material. Likewise, the district could better overcome shortages of foreign language and math teachers.

"We see a lot of possibilities," Smith said.

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