

Google to expand ultra-fast broadband to KC, Mo.

May 18 2011, By BILL DRAPER , Associated Press

More than a month after Kansas City, Kan., announced it would be the first place to get Google's ultra-fast broadband service, Kansas City, Mo., leaders declared their city the envy of the entire world after the search engine giant said it was expanding the service to their town.

Google announced in March it had picked Kansas City, Kan., as the inaugural site for its "Fiber for Communities" program, which is expected to deliver Internet access 100 times faster than [broadband connections](#) offered by telephone and [cable companies](#).

On Tuesday, the company said it had reached a deal with Kansas City, Mo., to run the high-speed [fiber optics](#) across the Missouri River and into the city. The first customers are expected to go online sometime in the middle of next year.

"The eyes of the entire world are on this city," said Cindy Circo, a Kansas City, Mo., councilwoman who led the drive to get Google to come to the city. "Tomorrow, they will be talking about us around the world, around the water coolers in London, pointing to us on maps in Hong Kong. Tomorrow, in a hundred different languages in far off corners of the world, people will be saying, 'have you heard of Kansas City?' We were once the capital of the West, songs were written about us and how we were up-to-date. St. Louis even built an arch to let people know how close they were to Kansas City."

High-tech businesses, hospitals, utilities and schools initially would be

the biggest beneficiaries of the network, which would provide rapid transmission of data and high-definition images far beyond what is available now.

As for the value to individuals, one industry analyst said that depends on pricing of the 1 gigabit service, since current available [broadband](#) speeds are plenty fast for most applications.

Craig Settles, an analyst who last week visited Chattanooga, Tenn., where a city-owned utility built its own 1 gigabit system, said Google's announcement is a big deal for Kansas City like it was when the Tennessee community announced its plans.

"Chattanooga has raised the bar on firstness," Settles said. "They can say 'we've got the infrastructure. We're on the leading edge.' That has value. Cities and counties have to market themselves if they want to attract people and businesses to come to the area. If you go to Chattanooga, the fact they have a network 10 times faster than the goal of the national broad plan, it gives their community a lot of pride. That's not to be devalued. It's an asset to the community."

There was plenty of chest-thumping at Tuesday's announcement in Kansas City.

"This morning we were the envy of our peers," said Mayor Sly James. "Now they've realized we are peerless. The world is looking to see what we will do with our faster Internet connectivity. I guarantee Kansas City will not disappoint. In fact, neither Kansas City will disappoint."

Milo Medin, Google's vice president of access services, said there has been no decision on how much the faster service will cost individuals. He also said the announcement doesn't mean any big influx of [Google](#) jobs.

"One of Google's goals is to make the web faster," Medin said. "We believe the innovation on the web is only in its beginning phases."

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