

Immediate Release
Friday, June 20, 2014

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FastTrack Wins Prestigious Business Award for Building Out a Fiber Optics Network for Rural Communities
Winner of the 2014 "Colorado Companies to Watch" Award

Durango, Colo. – At a celebration gala on Friday, June 20 in Denver, FastTrack Communications, based in Durango, Colorado, will be announced as a winner for the 2014 *Colorado Companies to Watch* award for their commitment to rural communities. Fifty businesses have been announced as winners out of more than 1,200 nominees and 106 finalists. *Colorado Companies to Watch* honors second-stage, Colorado businesses that contribute significantly to Colorado's economy through "generation of jobs, creating innovations that transform industries and displaying entrepreneurial leadership in the creation of amazing workplaces and support for their communities." FastTrack embodies each aspect of the winner qualifications, most notably, contributing to the economic health in both La Plata and Montezuma counties.

FastTrack Communications, a Competitive Local Exchange Carrier (CLEC) in CO and NM, is a facilities-based telecom provider with a mission to bring high speed Internet to the area's rural communities. La Plata Electric Association (LPEA) was instrumental in the late '90s in originally bringing broadband to the region, building fiber from Grand Junction to Albuquerque in partnership with Empire Electric Association (EEA), San Miguel Electric Association, Delta-Montrose Electric Association and Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association. The co-ops initiated the effort because the large telecom companies of the day saw no economic value in bringing fiber to the Four Corners region.

LPEA and EEA also formed the local telecom company, now known as FastTrack, to build and operate local fiber loops. Over the years, FastTrack has been steadily enhancing its network to provide increasingly better service, bandwidth and redundancy.

Much of this is done with FastTrack's own capital investment knowing it could be many years before seeing a return. Because the return on investment for laying fiber optics takes longer in rural zones, larger competitors remain focused on metropolitan locations due to its quicker payoff. This positions rural America at a disadvantage. FastTrack is combating this issue by

owning and managing its own fiber network – both in building out the infrastructure and becoming the last mile solution to connect directly to businesses.

FastTrack has over 420 miles of fiber optic network lines connecting primary markets in Colorado and New Mexico: FastTrack’s fully ringed network offers geographic diversity for customer connections. So what does this mean exactly? The high speed network offers a direct, affordable, connection via fiber versus copper, which is a slower Internet source. In downtown Durango, FastTrack has a 10Gbps ring with connected buildings having a minimum of a 1Gbps connection to each location. Internet Service Providers (ISPs) also benefit from FastTrack’s fiber optics offering them a chance to grow their services (both business and residential), and meet customer demands of high speed Internet at more locations.

Roger Zalneraitis, executive director of the La Plata County Economic Alliance, says, “There are really two things that enable national and international businesses in southwest Colorado to succeed: air service and Internet. FastTrack provides virtually unlimited high speed Internet through their fiber network, and backs their service with terrific engineers and great customer service.”

FastTrack takes pride in knowing its work is benefiting the economy and businesses, most importantly, the functioning body of area communities such as city governments, educational facilities, hospitals and non-profits. According to Bill Bishop, director of technology for the Bayfield School District, the FastTrack fiber project has benefited Bayfield School District immensely. Bishop says, “Our internet bandwidth has increased from 6mb to 100mb while decreasing costs by approximately \$400 per month. Now that service is tied directly to our ISP, we can easily, and more affordably, address future bandwidth needs. Our new capacity has allowed us to improve access across the entire district. This is important as we strive to deliver 21st century skills to our students here in Bayfield.”

General Manager for FastTrack, Kelly Hebbard, states that they are fulfilling the mission of FastTrack, which is to help stimulate the local economy through building the telecommunications infrastructure, and support critical, public service.

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