

EOT bringing ultra-fast Internet to Hermiston

BY JADE MCDOWELL
EO MEDIA GROUP

Internet in Hermiston is about to get a whole lot faster.

Eastern Oregon Telecom has announced it is bringing a fiber broadband network — boasting speeds 100 times faster than the average broadband Internet — to Hermiston and parts of Umatilla, Irrigon and Boardman.

The telecommunications company estimates the ultra-fast Internet will connect to about 8,000 homes and businesses by the end of 2016.

CEO Joseph Franell

said about 200 homes in Hermiston and on Umatilla's Main Street are already hooked up, with a second phase of 550 homes in the works. The new Internet speeds, which can download an entire high-definition movie in 36 seconds, will help fill a demand for more Internet capacity that Franell said has skyrocketed in the last six years.

"Anyone who is at all connected understands the voracious appetite for connectivity," Franell said.

More and more people are using the Internet to watch television and play games, but Franell said

it's about more than just entertainment. The fiber broadband will improve residents' ability to do everything from paying bills to taking college courses online. It will also increase efficiency for businesses and government entities that spend all day uploading and downloading data.

Franell said, once the project is done, all of Hermiston, as well as the commercial corridor of Umatilla, Irrigon and Boardman, will have better Internet connectivity than Portland and Salem. He said when Google Fiber rolled out fiber connectivity

in Kansas City, the prices of homes connected to the lightning-fast Internet increased by 17 percent and business start-ups flocked to the area.

"When you start looking for economic development in the region, robust telecommunications is certainly going to help our economy continue to grow," he said.

Eastern Oregon Telecom was created by Umatilla Electric Cooperative about 13 years ago to help the community, and Franell said the company is as focused on serving the community as it is on profits. That's why it is reinvesting

so much revenue into cutting-edge technology for the Hermiston area.

EOT is working with a Texas-based tech company called Huawei to create the infrastructure (known as Gigabit Passive Optical Network) necessary to bring Internet speeds of 1,000 mbps to the area.

Bill Gerski, Vice President of Sales for Huawei USA, said in a news release that the company was excited to bring its technology to the Hermiston area.

"Rural communities in America, which are typically under-served by broadband, are beginning to recognize the economic and social benefits of having fast and reliable connectivity," he said. "Huawei is committed to working with rural carriers and communities across the U.S. to help them get connected."

Mayor David Drotzmann said in a statement that the high speed Internet will expand educational and economic opportunities in the area.

"Super-fast, reliable and affordable broadband connectivity is becoming increasingly important in helping our community and businesses stay competitive," he said.

VISIT:

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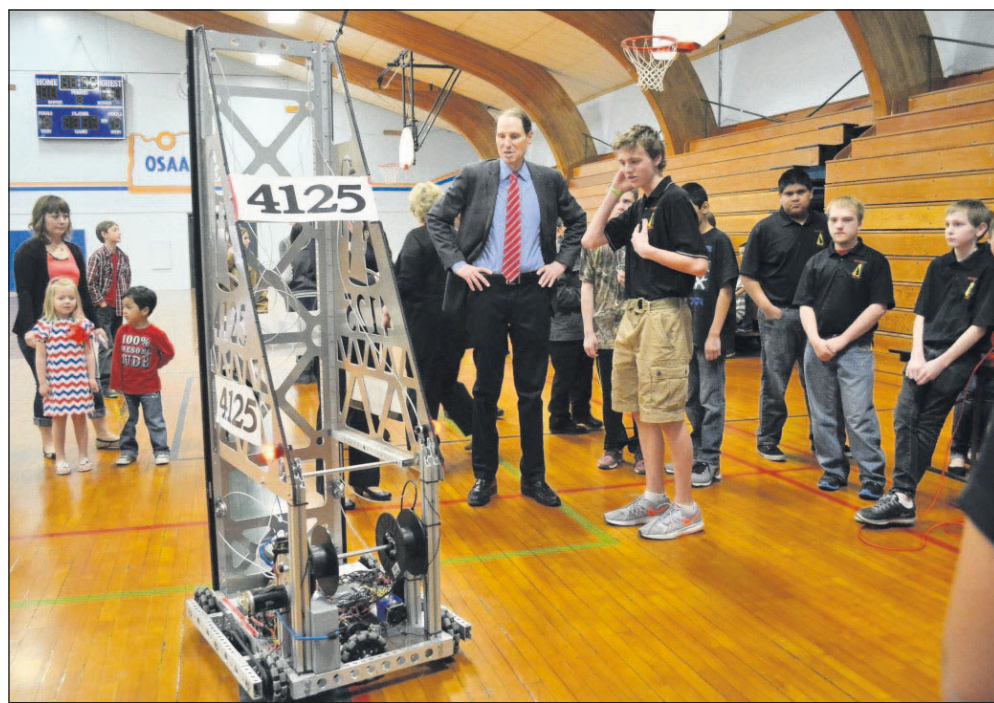
a year to Umatilla schools, alone.

On the subject of Common Core State Standards, however, Wyden said he feels the system needs to do a better job at meshing accountability with flexibility. He said the CCSS haven't reached that point yet.

Community members voiced their concerns of the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement that the federal government is currently in the process of negotiating. Wyden said, while he thinks officials need to do a better job of being open to public constituents about the process they are taking in developing that agreement, he feels it will benefit individuals across the nation.

"In Oregon, one out of six jobs is dependent on international trade," he said. "I'm going to do everything I can to come up with a fresh approach."

Wyden said his approach involves less secrecy over trade. He said secrecy just makes people cynical about what is tak-



Umatilla High School student Bradley Bensen shows U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden how the robotics team's robot operates during Wyden's visit to Umatilla Friday morning.

ing place. He said he also wants to enforce the laws already established more aggressively. Lastly, he said more accountability is needed over discussion on trade agreements.

"It's very important that the entire proposal is out in front of the public before the president signs it," he said.

Dennis Burke, CEO

at Good Shepherd Medical Center, asked Wyden about the 96-hour rule, which requires medical facilities to send patients to other facilities if they are unable to get treated within 96 hours. He said Good Shepherd may be perfectly capable of caring for that patient, but, instead, it has to spend the money and resources to ensure

that patient is transferred. Wyden agreed some changes to that law are



U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden speaks with community members and students about his efforts to make Oregon a better place Friday during a town hall meeting at Clara Brownell Middle School.

needed. "It means well ... but missed the need for flexibility," he said.

Wyden also addressed health care costs, stating 90 percent of Medicare payments are for people with chronic diseases like diabetes and heart disease. He said more effort

should be made to prevent those illnesses, which would decrease costs. Wyden said he introduced a Medicare reform bill in January called the Better Care, Lower Cost Act, which would encourage providers to do more with prevention while also treating the illness.

PARK RULE:

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ordinance states, "Defacing, mutilating or damaging any buildings, equipment, tables, benches, signs or other public property in any public park is prohibited," Edmiston recommended adding, "This includes any person using park equipment in any manner other than the intended use or design."

The current ordinance specifies that breaking the park rules is a class A violation, and Edmiston recommends authorizing officers to ban people who break the rules from the park for 30 days.

"I believe an addition such as this will give the police department the legal justification to stop a person who is sitting on a countertop inside the cook shack designed for food preparation and actual cooking and advise them to move on or be cited," he said. "... This will require the

police department to monitor and babysit individuals such as this, but I believe that is consistent with our goal of addressing livability issues in the city of Hermiston."

Recreation Supervisor Dan Earp said he believes the new language would be a positive step.

"I think it will help," he said. "I don't think that it will necessarily fix the problem, but, obviously, any little help we can get and partnering with other departments of the city is moving in the right direction."

Jackie Myers and Doug Primmer, the committee's City Council liaisons, said the proposed ordinance change would address the issue and make the parks more enjoyable to the public.

"I do think it's a problem, and I think it's a necessary thing so the police department can have a way to actually make something happen there," Myers said. "I think it's better than what we have

now, and I think it's a way for them to actually be able to enforce these ordinances."

Primmer said his first concern when considering a new rule is whether it will be too restrictive or if it could be misused, but, after reviewing this change, he did not believe that would be the case.

"I think it just gives the police department one more tool to help fix a problem, an ongoing situation," he said. "We don't want to take anything away from people. We don't want to restrict access, but we do need to give (the police) a tool that can help save our parks and help save the area from just being misused and abused."

Blue Mountain Community College

Student Spotlight: Did You Know?



Kevin Hawman
Hermiston

BMCC Precision Irrigated Ag Student

Kevin grew up on his family's farm in Hermiston, and when he got to BMCC, he wanted the precision irrigated agriculture program to have its own pivot. Ever the go-getter, Kevin was able to raise more than \$60,000 in donations towards a new pivot. He then worked with Valley Irrigation to obtain a \$30,000 discount on the pivot's price. Valley Irrigation was so impressed with Kevin's tenacity that its leadership invited Kevin to Omaha, Nebraska, to see Valley's headquarters in person earlier this month. BMCC is proud to call Kevin one of its outstanding students!

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