



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **CITY OF UKIAH BREAKS GROUND ON UKIAH GIGABIT FIBER PROJECT WITH VERO FIBER NETWORKS**

**UKIAH, CA — December 18, 2025** — The City of Ukiah and Vero Fiber Networks, LLC celebrated a major milestone on Tuesday, December 9<sup>th</sup>, with a groundbreaking ceremony for the Ukiah Gigabit Fiber Project, a transformative public–private partnership that will expand affordable, high-speed internet access citywide and close long-standing digital equity gaps.

The ceremony, held at the Ukiah Senior Center parking lot along the project route, was attended by Assemblymember Damon Connolly; representatives from Senator Mike McGuire’s office and Assemblymember Jim Wood’s office; Ukiah City Councilmember Juan Orozco; Mendocino County Supervisor Maureen Mulheren; and representatives from multiple local agencies.

The Ukiah Gigabit Fiber Project is made possible by a \$5.58 million California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) Federal Funding Account Last Mile grant, administered through the CPUC’s Last Mile Federal Funding Account program. The investment addresses long-standing challenges with broadband access in Ukiah, where limited and unaffordable high-speed internet has constrained economic opportunity, education, and healthcare—particularly for the 375 locations that are currently unserved.

The project will construct approximately 23 miles of new fiber optic infrastructure within the city—17 miles aerial and 6 miles underground—connecting an estimated 1,700 locations, including residences, schools, hospitals, and businesses. Of these, 375 locations currently lack adequate internet access. The network will be owned by the City of Ukiah and operated and maintained by Vero Fiber Networks under a 35-year agreement.

Under the public–private partnership, Vero Fiber Networks was selected through a competitive request for proposals based on strong qualifications, successful experience delivering CPUC-funded projects, and a demonstrated long-term commitment to the community. Vero will design and build the City-owned fiber network for approximately \$3.27 million and operate and maintain the system over the 35-year term. Customer pricing will be fixed for the first five years, as required by the grant, with affordable service options anticipated to begin at \$39.95 per month for eligible customers. For

residents and businesses, the project expands access to reliable, high-speed internet to support education, healthcare, remote work, and economic development, while strengthening the City's readiness for smart city technologies. Construction is expected to begin this winter, with project completion anticipated by late 2026.

"This groundbreaking marks the beginning of a project the City of Ukiah has pursued for many years," said City Councilmember Juan Orozco. "This is not just a construction project; it is an investment in digital equity, economic opportunity, and Ukiah's future. With the support of the CPUC and our partnership with Vero Fiber Networks, we are ensuring that every household—regardless of income or location—has the opportunity to fully participate in modern life."

Orozco added, "This public-private partnership shows what's possible when local government and private industry work together toward a shared goal. The economic benefits will be measured in the millions, but more importantly, this project is about connection—supporting our schools, businesses, and healthcare providers and positioning Ukiah for the future."

The Ukiah Gigabit Fiber Project is expected to strengthen the City's long-term economic competitiveness, attract job-creating businesses, and ensure that Ukiah is equipped with modern, resilient infrastructure as technology continues to evolve.

#### **About the City of Ukiah**

The City of Ukiah is committed to building infrastructure that supports economic vitality, environmental sustainability, and quality of life for all residents.

#### **About Vero Fiber Networks**

Vero Fiber Networks is a fiber-to-the-premises internet service provider delivering high-speed, affordable broadband through public-private partnerships across the western United States.



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Shannon Riley, Deputy City Manager

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