



Green River Area Development District

# MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Better Internet Initiative Listening Tour to Stop at GRADD

Last week, Gov. Andy Beshear announced the state will host a 14-stop listening tour beginning Tuesday, Feb. 14, in Hopkinsville as part of the ongoing Better Internet Initiative. The tour will be at the GRADD office (300 GRADD Way, Owensboro, KY) on Tuesday, February 21<sup>st</sup> from 1-3pm. Local leaders, community partners, business owners and residents are encouraged to attend one of these meetings to provide feedback as Kentucky develops its state broadband plan.

“Access to reliable high-speed internet is critical to the state’s future economic growth and will vastly improve the daily lives of all Kentuckians,” **Gov. Beshear** said. “While we are making great progress in our efforts to expand access, we can’t afford to leave any person or community – urban or rural – behind. That’s why we’re asking local leaders in education, health care and agriculture, as well as community partners, business owners and residents to take part in these conversations, which will help us identify precisely where more work needs to be done.”

“Better access to broadband is one of our region’s greatest needs,” said **GRADD Chairman Judge Steve Henry**. “This listening tour is a great opportunity for our community to have our voices heard. I encourage anyone who can, to come down to GRADD on February 21<sup>st</sup> to offer their input.”

The six-week listening tour hosted by the state’s Office of Broadband Development, in collaboration with the Education and Labor Cabinet, aligns with planning requirements laid out in the federal Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment Program as Kentucky develops a state high-speed internet plan.

“Billions of dollars to help Kentucky build out essential high-speed internet infrastructure are on the line. Having community-level input will help ensure Kentucky’s plan expands and improves internet access where it is most critically needed,” said **Office of Broadband Development Executive Director Meghan Sandfoss**. “Input from this listening tour, as well the formation of an advisory group comprised of key stakeholders from across the state, will help Kentucky create an effective and informed state plan that targets areas of both the greatest need and the greatest impact.”

Representatives from Education and Labor Cabinet will be joining Office of Broadband Development on the tour to solicit input on the development of the state’s digital equity plan.

“Ensuring more Kentuckians have access to reliable high-speed internet will significantly improve employment and educational opportunities, particularly in the commonwealth’s more rural or remote areas,” said **Education and Labor Cabinet Secretary Jamie Link**. “Hearing directly from citizens and businesses from across the state on this listening tour will be immensely helpful as we strive to finally bridge the digital divide that has existed in Kentucky for far too long.”

While not required, registration is highly encouraged. Visit

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/kentucky-office-of-broadband-development-listening-tour-owensboro-ky-tickets-520212318047> to learn more and register for the GRADD meeting date.

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*The Green River Area Development District (GRADD) is a regional planning agency and council of governments serving the communities of Daviess, Hancock, Henderson, McLean, Ohio, Union, and Webster counties. GRADD offers assistance in the fields of aging, health, and social services; community and economic development; transportation planning; and workforce development. Our mission is to afford local governments and citizens a regional forum to identify issues and opportunities, and to provide leadership in planning and implementing programs to improve the quality of life in our district.*

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