

INSTITUTE OF THE NORTH

Governor Walter J. Hickel, *Founder*

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Telecommunications workshop targets improved connectivity in Alaska

ANCHORAGE – Improving statewide connectivity in order to bolster economic development and support the delivery of essential services throughout Alaska will be the challenge before a group of telecommunications experts meeting Friday in Anchorage.

Hosted by University of Alaska and the Institute of the North and facilitated by Carnegie Mellon University’s Distinguished Service Professor Alex Hills, the workshop will bring together the state’s leading communications providers and a cross section of Alaska consumers to share information on the current and near-term telecommunications and infrastructure needs, as well as discuss how best to facilitate improved connectivity, especially in remote Alaska.

“When you compare the state of connectivity in a majority of Alaska with either the Lower 48 or internationally with our Arctic neighbors, we are either at the bottom of the list, or close,” said Ben Ellis, managing director of the institute and co-organizer of the workshop. “Where once Alaska was a leader in this field, we have slipped and slipped badly by comparison to services provided in other regions.”

Workshop keynote speaker, David Lassner, will share his perspectives on Hawaii’s efforts to advance that state’s telecommunication’s infrastructure. He currently chairs the Hawaii Broadband Task Force, which was established by the Hawaii State Legislature in 2007 to advance broadband throughout the state. Hawaii is one of numerous states that have recently enacted broadband legislation.

“Even though Alaska will need to develop its own unique plan, we hope to learn from Hawaii why and how they are moving forward to make high speed broadband available across the state,” said Steve Smith, University of Alaska’s chief information technology officer and co-organizer of the workshop.

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Founded by former Secretary of the Interior and twice governor of Alaska, Walter J. Hickel, the Institute of the North specializes in how to utilize and care for the resource-rich commons for the benefit of those living in the region. Areas of special study include Alaska, the new Russia, the many regions of the Arctic and other areas of the world with sparse populations yet wealthy in human cultures and natural resources. www.institutenorth.org