

## **HBC, RPU Set Broadband Power Line Trial**

WINONA, MN, February 2, 2004 – Hiawatha Broadband Communications, Inc. (HBC), Winona, and Rochester Public Utilities (RPU) today announced they will conduct a trial initiative that will offer broadband communications over RPU's existing power line infrastructure.

Acknowledging that power companies have for years been interested in utilizing their infrastructures for communications transmission, officials of RPU and HBC say recent technology developments make this an optimum time to conduct a trial in Minnesota.

One advantage BPL technology offers consumers is access to broadband internet connections via existing household electrical outlets, thereby maximizing the use of existing infrastructure.

"Recognizing that numerous field trials have already been held around the country with promising results, both HBC and RPU had independently been studying power line technology," said HBC President Gary Evans. "Recently, with power line commercial deployments scheduled, we approached RPU to assess its interest in a trial."

Larry Koshire, RPU general manager, said, "HBC's invitation to jointly investigate ways to utilize this new technology came at an opportune time. BPL technologies piqued RPU's interest. Our existing infrastructure, Rochester's geography, and the proximity of the two firms are certainly advantages," he said.

The Shpigler Group, a strategy management and consulting service based in New York, has been retained by the two firms to plan and monitor the test. President David Shpigler is the leading national expert in broadband power line (BPL) technology and strategy.

"The Shpigler Group has extensive experience in the BPL," said Koshire, "and his group will be utilized in developing an appropriate strategic and operational plan for use by the two companies."

A field trial will commence in spring of 2004, with evaluation of findings and a determination to follow.

Power line carrier is a proven technology for utility communications, but has only recently been adapted to broadband applications. RPU currently utilizes power line carrier for its air conditioner control program.

"The possibility of providing power line carrier access to communications companies offers RPU the opportunity to further leverage its investment in its 650 miles of power lines serving Rochester," said Koshire. "This could be similar to the pole rent we currently collect from seven communications providers that use our facilities."

Evans noted that HBC in 2002 conducted a seminar about broadband technology for members of the Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association. "Ever since that October session, we have been in contact with a number of municipal utilities from around the state," he said. "It seemed that it was time to test the technology in Minnesota. And Rochester contained all the components for an ideal test bed."

HBC began in 1992 as Luminet, a not-for-profit project that utilized a leased fiber-optic network to connect the community's educational institutions for the purpose of extending the reach of teaching and learning. Today, HBC is a privately held full-service telecommunications company providing more than 17,000 customers in Winona and St. Charles with cable television, telephone and internet services. More than 50 percent of HBC stock is owned by Winona area not-for-profit institutions, including public and private schools and universities, and the Winona Community

Foundation. HBC is committed to enhancing and enriching the lives of those it serves. In carrying out that vision, its mission pledges to its customers access to superior advanced communications and unparalleled personal service.

As the municipal utility of Rochester, Minn., for more than 110 years, RPU provides high-quality and reliable electricity to 42,000 customers and counting. Water customers number more than 31,000. RPU continually investigates innovative technologies to help customers realize the best value from the services they received. Current initiatives include fuel cell research and a wind power offering.

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