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My view: Fiber: Lighting the future of Utah's economy

By Lane Beattie

For the Deseret News

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The Governor's Office of Economic Development (GOED) reports that the quality and capacity of high-speed data infrastructure (especially fiber) are gaining prominence when it comes to important business decisions, from location to investments.

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Summary

I applaud the recent attention regarding increased fiber infrastructure in the Beehive State. Google Fiber, foreign investment dollars interested in UTOPIA, and our existing high-speed network providers are all providing faster fiber-optic services.

I applaud the recent attention regarding increased fiber infrastructure in the Beehive State. With Google Fiber, Macquarie Capital's interest in UTOPIA, and our existing high-speed network providers all stepping up to provide faster, more reliable data infrastructure — we all stand to benefit.

We are seeing more and more interest in Utah from around the world. While our quality of life, transportation and education systems rank high among our many strengths, we need to remain competitive and connected. Remaining competitive requires continued investments in our fiber network.

A growing element of competition is our state's connectivity through our fiber optics network. The quality and capacity of a high-speed data infrastructure is becoming a more important incentive for businesses and employees to stay, locate and invest in Utah.

The Governor's Office of Economic Development (GOED) reports that the quality and capacity of high-speed data infrastructure (representing all forms of broadband) are gaining prominence when it comes to important business decisions, from location to investments. The Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) reports it is looking more and more to fiber infrastructure to engineer "Smart Streets" to manage traffic flow and contribute to air quality efforts. In one

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recent five-year period, AT&T reported an increase in network data traffic of over 8,000 percent, with similar future growth expected.

High-speed broadband is hardly the luxury or novelty it may have been in the past. Our download speeds not only impact our investment dollars, but our education, medicine, commerce, agriculture, public safety and information throughout the state. In just over two decades, the Internet has become as vital to the economic vitality of Utah's business community as the Interstate Highway system and the electric grid.

We know that children with home Internet access have a decided advantage in academic advancement and eventual career earnings over children who do not. We need to unleash the limits of our children's education by providing them with access to the world's information super highway.

Just as connectivity is essential to our home and work lives, fiber infrastructure is essential for growing connectivity. It is the next wave of essential infrastructure for our towns, cities, states and nation. That is why we must applaud and facilitate any and all new investment initiatives in fiber infrastructure here in Utah from both old and new investors.

Nowhere is this more apparent than along the I-15 corridor in Northern Utah and Southern Salt Lake Counties where a booming information and technology sector is calling Utah home. To keep companies relocating (and even expanding) from the Silicon Valley to the Silicon Slopes, Utah needs to continue to support and foster our high-speed connections to the world.

A farmer in Cache Valley, an oil producer in the Uinta Basin or a downtown financial services giant are all competing in a global market. The quality and speed of their connection to the world will determine our community's economic fate. These investments affect every sector of our economy and every community in our state.

Recent announcements over the past year have shown that not only are companies interested in relocating to Utah, but also investing in this vital infrastructure. This bodes well for Utah's future economy. Because of this, it is crucial that we facilitate any and all new investment initiatives in Utah's broadband infrastructure.

Utah enjoys a global reputation as a good place to do business due to our reasonable regulatory and tax climates, coupled with a highly educated and motivated work force, among other reasons. We are known nationally for our fiscal prudence and for being the best-managed state. It only makes sense that our digital infrastructure rises to keep pace with our stature in other areas. We need to elevate our fiber-game, welcome and encourage new partnerships, and continue to invest in the next wave of fiber technology.

As we look to new frontiers to strengthen our economy, our connectivity as well as new developments and investments in Utah's broadband infrastructure present vital tools for our economic prosperity. Businesses are

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demanding it. To stand still is to lose ground for Utah's global competitiveness.

Lane Beattie is President and CEO of the Salt Lake Chamber.

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samhill Salt Lake City, UT

I agree with everything in this article. I have one caveat that I didn't see mentioned.

As we continue to become evermore connected via the Internet, regardless of the bandwidth, we are becoming evermore vulnerable to evermore [More..](#)

8:12 a.m. May 18, 2014 | ★ Top comment

Paul8777 Brigham City, UT

I also agree wholeheartedly with this article. It is extremely well stated, and I applaud Mr. Beattie. I also agree with samhill that vigilance is necessary, however I would point out that there are corollaries with other essential infrastructure. [More..](#)

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