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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Surprise City Center and Heritage District awarded \$1.65 million grant to increase broadband capacity

Glendale, Ariz. (July, 2022) -- The Surprise City Center and Heritage District were one of just three awardees in Maricopa County to be awarded as part of the Arizona Broadband Development Grant Program (ABDG). The \$1.65 million grant will help Wyyred, a local internet provider, install 40 miles of fiber to create broadband capacity in the two much-needed areas of Surprise.

“Quality of life, connectedness, and convenience is all benefited immensely by having broadband access,” said the City of Surprise Economic Development Director Jeanine Jerkovic. “A community can be left behind without broadband access and internet fluency in today’s day and age.”

The Surprise City Center is a square mile in the Surprise downtown area which is prime for development and economic opportunity. Surprise plans for this location to be the central hub for an emerging downtown filled with education, retail, and employment campuses with projections of 4,000 onsite residents by 2030. The Surprise Heritage District is an underserved population with significant barriers to affordable internet services; about 31% have no broadband access.

“During the pandemic, we had more conversations about the digital divide in our community,” said Jerkovic. “Broadband access is just as important as water, electricity and roads nowadays, and this grant will help us to lessen the divide.”

West-MEC sent a letter of support to aid the City of Surprise in being awarded the grant and is thrilled to be a partner in this critical effort.

“Education was a primary driver for this grant, and we are grateful to have a stakeholder in the community like West-MEC to aid us in our efforts,” said Jerkovic.

About West-MEC:

West-MEC is a career technical education public school district focusing solely on innovative career and technical education (CTE) programs that prepare students to enter the workforce and pursue continuing education. West-MEC CTE programs provide

students opportunities to earn college credit and industry credentials. West-MEC serves more than 37,000 students from 48 high schools across 3,800 square miles in the northern and western cities of the Phoenix Metropolitan area. West-MEC now also offers adult education programs. Visit www.west-mec.edu for more information about West-MEC's career-driven education opportunities, or follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

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