

\$700m Heartland Fiber Project launched to support AI-driven data centre growth across the US Midwest

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Three regional backbone fiber providers have announced a major joint infrastructure investment aimed at expanding high-capacity digital connectivity across the American Midwest and Mountain West regions.

DCN, Range and WIN Technology have unveiled the Heartland Fiber Project, a new long-haul fiber initiative that will create a 2,000-mile network route linking Denver and Chicago through seven states.

The US\$700 million project is designed to strengthen network capacity, resiliency and flexibility as demand for hyperscale data centres and AI-driven infrastructure accelerates across the United States.

The route will pass through Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, North Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin and Illinois, creating what the companies describe as a high-capacity backbone network capable of supporting next-generation artificial intelligence workloads and large-scale cloud computing operations.

Construction is scheduled to begin this summer, with deployment expected over the next one to two years.

AI infrastructure demand reshapes connectivity projects

The project reflects the rapidly growing pressure being placed on digital infrastructure by artificial intelligence and hyperscale computing.

As AI adoption increases, data centres require significantly larger volumes of high-speed, low-latency data transfer between facilities. This has intensified demand for long-haul fiber routes capable of supporting sustained bandwidth requirements at scale.

At the same time, hyperscale operators are increasingly moving beyond traditional coastal technology hubs into America's interior regions, attracted by lower land costs, available power supply and cooler climates that improve energy efficiency.

For project leaders across digital infrastructure, the challenge is no longer simply building data centres, but ensuring the surrounding connectivity ecosystem can support them.

Multi-state collaboration drives delivery scale

The Heartland Fiber Project also highlights the growing importance of collaborative delivery models within large-scale infrastructure development.

Rather than operating independently, the three regional providers are combining resources and network footprints to accelerate deployment and reduce duplication.

The project includes both high fiber-count infrastructure and future conduit pathways designed to accommodate long-term expansion as demand grows.

"This collaboration allows us to deliver scale and resiliency more efficiently than any one provider could alone," said Rob Johnstone, CEO at Range.

"By combining our strengths, we're creating meaningful infrastructure that addresses both current demand and future growth."

Supporting regional economic development

Beyond hyperscale demand, the project is expected to support broader economic and digital development across the region.

The companies said the expanded network will continue supporting sectors including healthcare, education, government, finance, manufacturing, wholesale and wireless communications.

By increasing long-haul capacity and improving route diversity, the infrastructure is expected to enhance network performance, reduce latency and improve service reliability for businesses and communities across the seven-state corridor.

Seth Arndorfer, CEO of DCN, described the project as transformational for regional investment.

"The Heartland Fiber Project is a gamechanger for North Dakota and the entire region," he said.

"It will ensure that we can meet the needs of businesses, including hyperscalers, looking to invest in our state as well as continuing to serve current customers with resilient, high-capacity infrastructure."

Digital infrastructure projects continue expanding

The announcement reflects a wider global surge in digital infrastructure investment as governments, cloud providers and private operators race to expand AI-ready networks and computing capacity.

Fiber backbone projects are increasingly becoming critical enabling infrastructure for broader economic growth, particularly as AI applications place greater pressure on data movement and processing speed.

For project professionals, initiatives like the Heartland Fiber Project demonstrate how infrastructure delivery is becoming more interconnected across energy, telecommunications and technology sectors.

The scale of AI-related development is also reshaping long-term planning assumptions around bandwidth demand, resilience requirements and future-proofing strategies.

Scott Hoffmann, CEO of WIN Technology, said the project would strengthen connectivity resilience while supporting future technological growth.

“The Heartland Fiber Project strengthens our ability to provide diverse connectivity to Chicago and west, while continuing to deliver reliable service that supports businesses, communities, and emerging technologies for years to come,” he said.

As AI adoption accelerates globally, projects like this are likely to become increasingly central to economic competitiveness, regional development and the future of digital infrastructure delivery.