

County to bid fiber project in December

By Mike Marturello mikem@kpcnews.net | Posted: Tuesday, November 16, 2010 12:00 am

ANGOLA — Bidding is expected to take place next month to determine who gets the contract to run a fiber optics network in Steuben County.

However, it is a foregone conclusion that the contract will go to Indian Metropolitan Area Network, a Steuben County-based non-profit organization that works under the umbrella of the Steuben County Community Foundation.

That's because work for the project includes specifications that require a percentage of fees from the system to be returned to funds held by the Steuben Community Foundation.

"To be safe, we are going to have to bid this," county attorney Don Stuckey said at a meeting of the Steuben County Commissioners on Monday. "I would be surprised if anyone (but iMAN) bids on this."

The bid specifications are being written to mirror a contract provided to the county by iMAN.

The commissioners and Steuben County Council have approved spending up to \$2 million in Major Moves Transportation Fund money on the project.

The project will provide fiber optic broadband technology for every community in the county. Currently the system is only in place in Angola. It serves high-speed communications fiber to Angola government with Steuben County in the process of connecting. All Metropolitan School District of Steuben County schools, except Pleasant Lake Elementary, are connected, as are Cameron Memorial Community Hospital and Trine University. There are a limited number of businesses connected, too.

Fiber has been extended to Fremont. All that needs to be done for completion there is receiving rights of way from Northern Indiana Public Service Co. to get fiber strung on poles; underground fiber already is run to Fremont from Angola.

If the bid is approved in December, iMAN can start work in January, but most likely the work won't start until March.