

iMAN ready to roll

By Mike Marturello mikem@kpcnews.net | Posted: Thursday, October 6, 2011 12:00 am

ANGOLA — The Steuben County fiber optics project funded primarily by Major Moves money from the county could be completed by about December 2012.

The project, with \$2 million in funding from the county and thousands of dollars from grant sources, received bid approval Monday by the Steuben County Commissioners.

The bids approved covered about \$1.575 million for running the Indiana Metropolitan Area Network fiber optic network that functions under the umbrella of the Steuben County Community Foundation.

With about 90 percent of the 950 utility poles that the fiber will be hung on ready for construction, the project could start fairly soon, said Bill Geiger, fiber optic network manager.

“There are lots of areas where we can just roll,” Geiger said. “My goal is to be completed by December 2012.”

It will cost about \$125,000 to pay Northern Indiana Public Service Co. and Steuben County REMC to get some of their poles ready to accept hanging of the fiber, Geiger said.

Work to get the fiber run to Ashley and Orland should be fairly smooth. Other areas of the county will have to possibly wait for poles to be prepared by the utilities. In areas where a significant amount of pole work would be required, Geiger said directional boring would be used to place the fiber under ground.

Most of the work is going to be done by AMcomm Telecommunications, White Lake, Mich.

The iMAN organization is a non-profit organized by the Steuben Community Foundation. It was designed to bring high-speed communications to the county because it is generally accepted that private business would not because doing so would not be cost effective in a rural community.

So far, those connected to the iMAN system includes schools, government, Cameron Memorial Community Hospital and a handful of businesses. Of the money that iMAN collects for service, a percentage is given to the Community Foundation, which in turn can give

that money to communities in the form of grants.

As the system stands, iMAN generates \$90,000 annually for the Community Foundation.

Because iMAN is a non-profit organization, it provides service at a cost that is much less than what could be offered by private business.