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City of Amarillo, Mimosa by Airspan to Provide Low-Cost Broadband to Help Up to 10,000 Students, Low-Income Residents in Model Digital Divide Program

Amarillo Connected Project Underway, Working Closely with Impact Broadband

AMARILLO, Texas & BOCA RATON, Fla.--(BUSINESS WIRE)-- The City of Amarillo, Impact Broadband and Mimosa by Airspan, a subsidiary of Airspan Networks Holdings Inc. (NYSE American: MIMO) are teaming up to bring the project, *Amarillo Connected*, to life. The goal is simple: provide low-cost broadband access to Amarillo to bridge the digital divide and help up to 10,000 students and low-income residents.

This press release features multimedia. View the full release here:

<https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20211213005290/en/>



Amarillo, Texas (Photo: Business Wire)

When Amarillo CIO Rich Gagnon came to Amarillo five years ago from Palo Alto Networks, he immediately saw that a deep divide existed between those with connectivity and those without. Amarillo shares many of the same challenges similar to other small cities across the US trying to provide connectivity to students and the community. The one

thing that makes Amarillo's digital divide issue unique is the number of refugees who add to the population. According to the Refugee Language Project, 12,000 refugees have settled in Amarillo and 59% of this population are enrolled in English as a Second Language Programs. Access to education for this portion of the community is critical for them to become a US Citizen and contribute to the long-term growth of Amarillo's economy. The North Heights Neighborhood best represents the challenges facing Gagnon and his team. "There is no broadband available in most of this area, and where it does exist, it is priced far

above the national average,” said Gagnon. When COVID hit Amarillo, Mayor Ginger Nelson, and City Council Member Howard Smith kicked off *Amarillo Connected*, assigning Gagnon and CFO Laura Storrs to lead the effort.

Amarillo Connected began as a series of proof-of-concept efforts to trial various technology solutions. Amarillo Independent School District (AISD) and Region 16 aligned with the City as part of this effort and quickly realized that Gagnon’s vision is vital to ensuring that students and staff have equal access to education. Like many school districts, AISD has turned to wireless Mi-Fi Hotspots to connect students while learning remotely, a model that has identified “coverage gaps” and will prove to be unsustainable long-term.

Gagnon was looking for a solution that had been proven to be successful in similar deployments and to have the benefit of simplicity. Part of the plan to make this network sustainable is for the City to support the deployment, monitoring, maintenance and repair with staff from the City or a local partner.

Mimosa by Airspan Chosen to Provide Fixed Wireless Access (FWA) and Wi-Fi Solution

Mimosa by Airspan's Fixed Wireless Access (FWA) and Wi-Fi solution was a clear winner, meeting the City’s detailed requirements. Mimosa outperformed its competitors by a wide margin – two other products were tested and rejected. Mimosa by Airspan engineers were able to get the pilot sites up quickly. Airspan has the only outdoor radio point-to-multi-point (PTMP) solution capable of operating on spectrum from 4.9 GHz – 6.425 GHz.

“We chose Mimosa by Airspan for lots of reasons,” said Gagnon. “The key reasons were simplicity of deployment, proven technology, and their support, technology and planning resources.”

The partners are currently in the pilot phase, testing Mimosa by Airspan equipment to optimize performance for in-home student use. The testing has achieved symmetrical speeds of 100 Mbps (megabits per second). The City of Amarillo is using Mimosa by Airspan A5c Access Points and C5x radios, with plans to upgrade to Mimosa by Airspan’s new 6 series of Wi-Fi 6E based FWA solutions in early 2022.

Based on the urgency of serving students, speed of deployment is critical. The goal is to have 50 square miles covered by the end of the 2021-22 school year. This includes providing in-home broadband access in all Amarillo independent school district locations, in addition to the approximately 10,000 students. Thousands of students are expected to be able to access broadband for the first time – particularly in northern Amarillo.

Helping Healthcare Professionals

Mimosa by Airspan will also provide connectivity at the new Amarillo healthcare annex, a community healthcare center. This includes VoIP voice solutions, and high-speed internet access for doctors and nurses. Mimosa by Airspan will also provide fixed wireless point-to-point (PTP) Wi-Fi-enabled connectivity at the City’s Bomb Squad headquarters.

One of the “Best Pilot Programs” In the Nation

Gaby Rowe, Project Lead for Texas' Operation Connectivity, was introduced to Amarillo

Connected by Impact Broadband, a project consultant for Amarillo Connected. Rowe has been actively assisting the State of Texas negotiate technology solutions needed to support remote learning. She has implemented several programs to reduce costs to cities and school districts across the state, bridging the divide to hundreds of thousands of students. “Amarillo Connected is one of the best pilot programs of its type I have seen in the nation,” said Rowe. “This type of infrastructure is needed to bridge the digital divide that creates obstacles for underserved areas.”

Application Submitted for State Funding of \$100M to Cover 55 Texas Communities

Rowe has recently assisted the City in submitting an application to the Texas Broadband Development Office for funding of up to \$100 million to cover the region surrounding Amarillo, comprised of 55 communities. If successful, *Amarillo Connected* will transform to *Panhandle Connected*. This network will add over 80 towers and 70 repeaters to the City’s network. Impact Broadband will work closely with the City and Region 16 to ensure the network is sustainable financially and all 53 rural communities have access to broadband. The Region 16 Technology Services Division provides support for internal and external clients as it strives to support state and regional objectives. Consultation, training and continuing technical support are offered to LEAs for local area networks, including the Internet and videoconferencing.

Mayor Nelson feels, “*Amarillo Connected* is a game changer for the entire 26 county region of the Texas Panhandle. It will bring equitable internet services to areas that have struggled with reliable connectivity. Whether these areas are in poorer, urban parts of the City of Amarillo or in the rural small towns, residents who live there urgently need our help within the city without the infrastructure, but also those small towns where there’s not any as well. To say I’m excited is an understatement. Citizens having equal access to internet for education, healthcare, banking, and civil services is a crucial component to day-to-day life. I am incredibly proud of the team that has worked tirelessly to build this program.”

Gagnon adds, “I am doing this to drive equity to all citizens and force economic development that outlasts me. This network will allow my grandchildren to innovate and make Amarillo a place people want to raise a family, start a business or relocate to. This project’s success is an important example of leadership in education, non-profit, government, private sector, and citizens working together to solve difficult challenges in our community.”

A Digital Divide Model for US Municipalities and States

“*Amarillo Connected* is a model for other municipalities and states to use to help bridge the Digital Divide,” said Jaime Fink, Mimosa by Airspan VP Technology, Fixed Wireless. “We are proud to be part of this terrific project, and to use our industry-leading Fixed Wireless Access and Wi-Fi solutions to help provide broadband connectivity to students and their families.”

About the City of Amarillo

The City of Amarillo serves a population of over 200,000 citizens, and provides support services for rural communities throughout the 26-county Texas Panhandle. The City operates all services and programs with the intent to provide the best environment for every Amarillo resident to find and achieve their potential for greatness. Open Spaces – Endless

Opportunities. For more information, please visit www.amarillo.gov.

About Airspan

Airspan Networks Holdings Inc. (NYSE American: MIMO) is a U.S.-based provider of groundbreaking, disruptive software and hardware for 5G networks, and a pioneer in end-to-end Open RAN solutions that provide interoperability with other vendors. As a result of innovative technology and significant R&D investments to build and expand 5G solutions, Airspan believes it is well-positioned with 5G indoor and outdoor, Open RAN, private networks for enterprise customers and industrial use applications, fixed wireless access (FWA), and CBRS solutions to help mobile network operators of all sizes deploy their networks of the future, today. With over one million cells shipped to 1,000 customers in more than 100 countries, Airspan has global scale. For more information, visit www.airspan.com.

Mimosa, a subsidiary of Airspan, is the global technology leader in wireless broadband solutions, delivering fiber-fast connectivity to service providers and enterprise, industrial, and government operators worldwide. Mimosa access, backhaul and client solutions are deployed in a hybrid-fiber-wireless architecture, and engineered for both point-to-point and point-to-multipoint connections, across a variety of diverse applications including residential and business high-speed internet access, surveillance, agribusiness, education, and hospitality networking. Mimosa's technology delivers unprecedented levels of cost-effective spectral efficiency, allowing scarce spectrum to be concurrently and reliably shared across networks. Mimosa was acquired in 2018 by another subsidiary of Airspan Networks Holdings Inc. (NYSE American: MIMO), the award-winning, leading vendor of 5G software and hardware.

Operation Connectivity

Operation Connectivity is a statewide joint effort between Governor Greg Abbott, the Texas Legislature, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and TX ESC Region 4 to enable long-term home connectivity for Texas's 5.5 million public school students through the provision of an e-learning device and reliable high-speed home-based internet connections sufficient for learning.

About Impact Broadband

Impact Broadband was formed to support rural communities and K-12 in their quests to bring digital equity to residents. Impact Broadband is focused on equalizing education among the countries most underserved communities. By leveraging over a decade's worth of experience assisting commercial carriers with large network deployments, we ensure community leaders are looking at technology solutions that offer a sustainable model and potential for public and private partnerships. For more information, please visit us at www.ImpactBroadband.net

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City of Amarillo Media Contact

Jordan Schupbach

Jordan.schupbach@amarillo.gov

806-378-3549

Airspan Media Contact
Howie Waterman
hwaterman@airspan.com
917-359-5505

Operation Connectivity Media Contact
Gaby Rowe
gaby@growassociatesllc.com

Impact Broadband Media Contact
Melissa Ashurst
melissa@impactbroadband.net
470-848-0319