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## Subsea Work Begins on Fiber Optic Cable Network in Southeast

ANCHORAGE, Alaska, July 17 /PRNewswire-FirstCall/ -- Engineers skilled in laying undersea telecommunications cable will begin working in Southeast Alaska waters this month, placing 750 miles of fiber optic cable on the ocean floor, GCI officials announced today.

For residents in Ketchikan, Wrangell, Petersburg, Angoon and Sitka this means high-speed connections for Internet, phone and video; in Juneau, residents will benefit from additional fiber optic cable creating a self-healing fiber ring within Southeast Alaska.

Shore-end operations are scheduled to commence July 18 in Ketchikan. Shore-end operations in Wrangell will be about four days later; in Petersburg about three days later, and in Sitka about 15 days later.

The \$33 million project will connect five more communities to the Alaska United West line that currently connects Alaska to the Lower 48, providing alternate routing and overflow traffic-handling capabilities for residents of these Southeast communities. GCI expects the system to be complete by November 2008.

"This fiber optic network will provide new and faster services to more than 50,000 people in Southeast Alaska," said Richard Dowling, GCI's senior vice president of corporate development. "The addition to our network is another important step in creating and maintaining a self-healing telecommunications network."

Residents in Ketchikan, Wrangell, Petersburg, Sitka and Angoon are currently served through microwave and satellite networks. The fiber optic link will be more reliable and faster than microwave and satellite networks. Residents in other Southeast communities will also benefit with the reduction in demand on the existing systems. GCI owns two of the three networks currently tying Alaska to the Lower 48.

Fiber optic technology uses light pulses to transport digital information from one point to another. Fiber optics are thin filaments of glass through which light beams are transmitted. Advantages of fiber include high information carrying capacity (bandwidth), very low error rates and insensitivity to electromagnetic interference.

The new fiber network will meet the ever-growing capacity requirements of the residents in Southeast Alaska and has the capacity to keep up with the growth of both current and potential Internet, wireless, phone and video services. In addition, the network will allow Southeast residents access to more medical and educational opportunities from their own communities through GCI's ConnectMD and SchoolAccess networks.

"The quality of life and the potential for economic development increase as community

access to telecommunications services increase," said Dowling. "From small business owners looking to increase their client base to employees who can be hired to work remotely via telecommunications, a robust network positively affects all Alaskans."

Marine routing of the cable was carefully planned with safety and historical uses of the seafloor in mind. Stakeholders in the area were consulted including local fishermen, pilots, the United States Coast Guard, harbor masters and other permit agencies. The subsea cable follows the Inside Passage from Ketchikan to Juneau, then heads south to connect to Angoon and west to connect to Sitka.

GCI obtained permits from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the USDA Forest Service, the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, various local agencies and local municipalities where the fiber comes on shore. Public input was also solicited along with comments from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

GCI is the largest telecommunications company in Alaska. GCI operates Alaska's most extensive terrestrial/subsea fiber optic network. The fiber network extends from the North Slope oil production facilities through Fairbanks, Juneau and Anchorage. The company's satellite network provides communications services to small towns throughout rural Alaska. The company is in the process of constructing Alaska's first, truly statewide mobile wireless network which will seamlessly link urban and rural Alaska for the first time. GCI is also the leading provider of communications services to enterprise customers, particularly large business customers with complex data networking needs. More information about the company can be found at <http://www.gci.com>.

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