

Free WI-FI Coming to Downtown Eagle River?

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Free wireless internet service could be available for visitors to downtown Eagle River by this summer following a vote last week by the Eagle River Main St. Program.

Main St. Executive Director Martha Geiseman said the idea of free Wi-Fi for downtown has been explored at the committee level since last fall, and has been strongly backed by everyone who reviews the plan.

"If support continues to grow, we'll be contracting with ChoiceTel for installation of the system by Memorial Day," Geiseman said. "The Main St. Board of Directors voted last week to fund the project and now the biggest hurdle is locating about 20 businesses to host an indoor mini-transmitter which is about a foot tall and 2 inches wide."

To start, the network of mini-transmitters will supply a Wi-Fi signal along Railroad St. from Riverview Park to Wall St. and then east along Wall St. to about 2nd St. The system will be expandable as demand and budgets allow.

"Wi-Fi access will be 'open source' and free to the public at a speed of 100 megabits shared among all users," Geiseman said. "We'll also likely impose some usage time limits in order to assure that the service is only used as intended as a convenience for those visiting downtown."

"The Main St. Program is pretty excited about this project," Geiseman concluded. "Not too many small cities like Eagle River offer free Wi-Fi to visitors to the central business district and so we think the service will offer a great competitive advantage to businesses in our town."