

## Fiber technology helps drive the economy

Through its fiber construction project, PRTC is helping equip Colleton County to create and retain jobs

**E**conomic development is like a complicated puzzle. A seemingly endless number of pieces must fall into place before an industry or other business will choose to locate in an area. A quality transportation system, good schools and a reliable power supply are a just a few of the components that companies look for when selecting a home for expansion or relocation.

Today, that list of requirements includes the presence of an advanced telecommunications network. "There was a time when companies would ask if fiber optic service was available - but today they expect you to have it," says **Heyward L. Horton**, executive director of the Colleton County Economic Alliance.

The Alliance is a partnership among local city and county governments, along with business and community leaders. "Our mission is to market the industrial and business assets of Colleton County to the rest of the world," Horton says, "to attract and retain capital investments."

PRTC's fiber construction project will certainly assist the Alliance in its mission. "We're in the midst of a five-year fiber overbuild that will allow us to bring the most advanced telecommunications services possible to the region we serve," says **Tony Stout**, PRTC's chief technology officer. "These advanced services include Microsoft Mediaroom, higher speeds of broadband access and movies on demand."

The cooperative is taking a strategic approach to building its new fiber network. Using its cutting-edge computerized mapping system, engineers are identifying the portions of its service area where access to high-speed Internet is limited. Fiber is being built to these areas first to achieve system-wide availability of broadband and digital TV. From there, construction will continue



**PLANNING FOR PROGRESS** — PRTC engineer Mike Williams discusses the utility's broadband expansion plans with Heyward Horton, executive director of the Colleton County Economic Alliance.

until every home and business in the PRTC service area has access to a fiber connection at their premises.

### COMMUNITY FOCUS

In addition to providing the services that residents demand, PRTC understands broadband's larger role in building a community. Connecting the schools with fiber technology was the cooperative's first priority.

"Having a broadband connection is so important," says **Cliff Warren**, principal at the new Colleton County High School, which opened this fall on Jefferies Highway in Walterboro. "With the amount of information available to students today and the way it's changing by the minute, if we don't have access then we are losing our

students."

Next, PRTC's focus shifted to building fiber to government offices at the city and county levels, as well as to businesses.

"PRTC continues to be an outstanding partner for the county," says **J. Kevin Griffin**, Colleton County Administrator. "This broadband project is just another example of the cutting-edge technology through broadband and fiber that they are bringing to our community - to continue to expand our toolkit for economic development."

### INDUSTRY DEMANDS SPEED

Just a few years ago, Internet access meant simply looking at websites and sending email. Today, companies depend on a broadband connection for so much more.