New Consortium Announces Deployment of East Coast's First Connection Point to Multiple, Major National, High-Speed Network Initiatives

WASHINGTON, May 6 /PRNewswire/ -- The Southeastern Universities Research Association (SURA), NET.WORK.VIRGINIA (NWV), the Washington Research and Education Network (WREN), Maryland GigaPOP, Bell Atlantic and GTE are pleased to announce the formation of the Mid-Atlantic Crossroads (MAX).

MAX will bring together the collective expertise of universities, technology providers and information service providers in the Middle Atlantic states to establish the first Washington, D.C., area aggregation point for advanced information services. MAX also will provide access to several other advanced network initiatives, including the National Science Foundation's vBNS network, the Department of Energy's ESnet, commercial Internet providers and others.

Most significantly, MAX is a national leader in committing to establish a very high speed link (OC12) to project Abilene, the world's most advanced backbone network available to universities. The Abilene network was recently established by the University Corporation for Advanced Internet Development (UCAID).

Another UCAID program, Internet2, is developing advanced networking capabilities and applications for research-based universities nationwide. These new networking capabilities will enable students, professors and researchers to instantly transmit and receive huge volumes of data, graphics, video, sound and image files for use in "real time" distributed research and educational applications. Applications include co-laboratories, immersive environments (virtual reality), remote control of scientific instruments and distance education.

"We're no longer receiving and collecting information monthly or daily -- the pace is now hourly and even by the minute," said George H. Brett, II, director of networking initiatives at SURA. "We need high-speed networks and advanced applications to manage this flood of information and data. This initiative will give us a competitive advantage, both nationally and internationally."

MAX will deploy the Mid-Atlantic MetaPOP to function as the aggregation and switching point, providing a linchpin for advanced regional network initiatives in the northeast tied into the East Coast GigaPOP Consortium (ECGC) and the Southeast through Southern Crossroads (SoX).

The MetaPOP will create an exchange among all participating networks and users. The architecture will support fully integrated, multimedia services and extremely high performance connections. The Mid- Atlantic MetaPOP will extend beyond the needs of education and government to provide an interconnect point for all parties who wish to participate, including commercial services.

This network will ultimately provide an infrastructure to schools, hospitals, governments and businesses to communicate via high-speed access.

Bell Atlantic and GTE will each partner with MAX founding members to provide design, engineering and operational support for the MetaPOP, as well as fiber optic connections and high speed switching services. Interconnection of components provided by Bell Atlantic, GTE and other partners will comprise a highly flexible, powerful, multi-vendor distributed MetaPOP architecture. The MetaPOP will be a multi-vendor environment.

Technology partners for creation of the MetaPOP include Cisco, Fore Systems, IBM and Virginia's Center for Innovative Technology. MAX invites participation from other partners as the initiative evolves.

About the Mid-Atlantic Crossroads (MAX)

MAX's founding institutions are The George Washington University, Virginia Tech, Georgetown University, the University of Maryland and The Southeastern Universities Research Association (SURA).

About The Southeastern Universities Research Association (SURA)

SURA is a consortium of 41 universities in 13 southeastern states and the District of Columbia established in 1980 as a nonprofit corporation. The organization's purpose is to serve as an entity through which colleges, universities, and other organizations may cooperate with one another and with government and other organizations in acquiring, developing and using laboratories, machines, and other research facilities and in furthering knowledge in the physical, biological and other natural sciences and engineering. (http://www.Sura.org)

About NET.WORK.VIRGINIA (NWV)

NET.WORK.VIRGINIA (NWV) was established to provide affordable access to advanced network services for the Commonwealth of Virginia. Led by Virginia Tech, NWV today provides access to more than 200 other participants including higher education, community colleges, K - 12 schools, libraries, municipalities and state agencies. Internet2 member institutions currently connected to NET.WORK.VIRGINIA include Virginia Tech, Old Dominion University, the University of Virginia, Virginia Commonwealth University, and George Mason University. NWV will work with SURA to provide design, engineering, network management, operations and developmental support for the MetaPOP. (http://www.networkvirginia.net)

About the Washington Research and Education Network (WREN)

The WREN is currently a National Science Foundation (NSF) vBNS project, which includes The George Washington University, Georgetown University and SURA, with the University of Maryland as a partner. WREN plans to grow, and to include participation by other higher education institutions in Washington, D.C.

About the Maryland GigaPOP

The Maryland GigaPOP is an aggregation point for connection to major national high-speed network initiatives. It includes the University of Maryland, College Park and the University of Maryland, Baltimore County.

About the University Corporation for Advanced Internet Development (UCAID)

UCAID provides leadership and direction for advanced networking development within the U.S. university community. Its activities include the Internet2 project, as well as other programs devoted to network research, technology transfer and collaborative activities in related fields such as distance learning and educational technology. (http://www.ucaid.edu)

Internet2

The Internet2 project is a collaborative project by over 120 U.S. universities, in partnership with industry leaders and U.S. federal agencies, to develop a new family of advanced applications to meet emerging academic requirements in research, teaching and learning. Internet2 is addressing this challenge by creating a leading edge network capability, enabling a new generation of applications, and integrating these efforts with the current academic Internet services. (http://www.internet2.edu)

About Southern Crossroads (SoX)

SoX is a cooperative initiative by the members of the SURA. Current activities within the Southern Crossroads include: WREN, the Atlanta GigaPOP, the North Carolina Research and Education Network GigaNet, NWV and the Southeast Partnership to Share Computational Resources (SEPSCoR) network.

About Bell Atlantic

The new Bell Atlantic -- formed through the merger of Bell Atlantic and NYNEX -- is at the forefront of the new telecommunications, information and entertainment industry. With 41 million telephone access lines and 6.7 million wireless customers worldwide, Bell Atlantic companies are premier providers of advanced wireline voice and data services, market leaders in wireless services and the world's largest publishers of directory information. Bell Atlantic companies are also among the world's largest investors in high-growth global communications markets, with operations and investments in 22 countries. (http://www.ba.com)

About GTE

With 1997 revenues of more than $23 billion, GTE is one of the world's largest telecommunications companies and a leading provider of integrated telecommunications services. In the United States, GTE provides local service in 28 states and wireless service in 17 states; nationwide long-distance and internetworking services ranging from dial-up Internet access for residential and small business consumers to Web-based applications for Fortune 500 companies; as well as video service in selected markets.

Outside the United States, the company serves more than 7 million telecommunications customers. GTE is also a leader in government and defense communications systems and equipment, directories and telecommunications-based information services, and aircraft-passenger telecommunications. (http://www.gte.com)

SOURCE: Mid-Atlantic Crossroads