

COOPERATION CALLED KEY TO ELECTRONIC LINKS

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Bringing Utah consumers the benefits of the "electronic highway" advocated by Gov. Mike Leavitt depends on state leaders working together, according to Mark W. Stromberg, US WEST Communications vice president for Utah.

Development of the electronic highway promises to position Utah competitively with the rest of the world and bring a vast array of choices and opportunities for Utahns, he said. Speaking during the 1993 summit meeting on rural development at Southern Utah University, Stromberg said if Utah's local electronic highway is to reach its full potential, industry participants, state and local government leaders, regulators and state and federal legislators must work together to create the best possible environment.

Stromberg said a convergence of technologies, services and industries has led to telephone companies, cable companies and others maneuvering for position on the emerging electronic highway. "These changes will result in choices for Utah consumers - not only a choice in services, but also a choice in service providers."

Citing the merger of large communications companies in recent months, Stromberg said it will increase competition and US WEST will be engaged in full-scale, across-the-board competition.

That means business and residential customers will probably be able to choose between two local telephone companies and numerous radio-based cellular systems for telephone service.

He said US WEST will complete a fiber optic line from Logan to St. George next year and have 99 percent of its customer lines served by electronic switching systems by the end of 1993 that "will contribute greatly to rural economic development and education opportunities."