



GREENE GOVERNMENT NEWS

Moving Our County Forward

November 14, 2022

Greene County to Provide \$2.2 Million for Last Mile High Speed Fiber Internet to Unserved Roads and Households



Catskill, NY - November 14, 2022 - At its November 14th meeting, the Greene County Legislature authorized the execution of three contracts with Local Internet Service Providers (ISPs), including, Mid-Hudson Cable, Margaretville Telephone Company, and Charter Communications providing funding to assist with the installation of High Speed Fiber Internet to unserved areas of Greene County.

The Greene County Departments of Planning, Economic Development, and Real Property Tax Services solicited proposals from ISPs interested in installing High Speed Fiber Internet. As part of the process, the County joined forces with local ISPs to inventory and map the proverbial last mile of unserved roads and households without Internet access.

In this unique public/private partnership the County is contributing \$2.2 million dollars that will fund the installation of High-Speed Fiber Internet to approximately 1,400 addresses and 112 miles of unserved roadways. The County's contribution will fund the most difficult last mile roads. The ISPs will continue to build out roads with High-Speed Internet in their normal course of business to approximately 725 addresses and 47 miles of road. With the completion of this effort, virtually all existing Greene County addresses that currently have electric service (on-grid) will have access to High-Speed Internet. The County's Request for Proposals solicited proposals in defined target areas across the County with the majority of unserved roads concentrated on the mountaintop, particularly portions of the Towns of Catskill, Durham, Windham, Ashland, and Prattsville.

"Greene County is able to make this important infrastructure investment with a portion of the federal funding it received under the American Rescue Plan Act" states Patrick S. Linger – Chairman of the Greene County Legislature. "Therefore, it will put no additional burden on our taxpayers, and provide access to a service that is essential to how we live, work and learn."

The 'Get Better Connected' Greene County Broadband Initiative assembled an unprecedented consortium of county departments, expert consultants, and private broadband service providers to develop a plan and implement solutions. "Data sharing, partnerships with our local ISPs, and a tailored approach suited to rural counties proved to be key to making this happen" noted Warren Hart, Deputy County Administrator.

"This is great news for Greene County", noted Hart. "Early on we understood the need to take a leadership role in this field and that the solution was detailed mapping at the street level and not the census block level approach previously supported by the State and Federal Government. This was an ambitious plan which took enormous effort."

Legislator Linda Overbaugh, who chairs the County's Economic Development Committee believes this program will attract both businesses and remote workers to Greene County in an unprecedented way. "Fiberoptic Broadband

enables people to work from anywhere that has connectivity”, she stated. “Businesses seeking to relocate or expand in our communities can now be confident that they will have access to this service that is so critical to their operations.”

“Affordable, reliable, high-speed broadband has been a top concern of the Greene County Legislature. The realities of remote learning also became painfully apparent under the response to the COVID-19 pandemic”, notes Majority Leader Matt Luvera. “As a local educator, I experienced first-hand the difficulties associated with online teaching. The success of this effort is a huge step in giving families the necessary tools to access the internet from home and to help bring success to their children in school.”

Minority Leader Harry Lennon stated “Telecommunications infrastructure and broadband service have transformed the way people, public organizations, and companies communicate, educate, work, and live. Broadband, and the fiber optic backbones that support it, have undeniably become the “interstate highway” of the 21st century.”

Glen Faulkner, General Manager of the Margaretville Telephone Company comments “There is strong agreement regarding the need to provide ubiquitous broadband availability for all residents within our communities. The Greene County Economic Development team has done a tremendous job in identifying the remaining regions unserved with broadband. The resulting Greene County Broadband Initiative has brought together the local service providers with a desire to work collaboratively, leveraging the benefits of public/private partnerships, to find cost-effective and timely solutions for extending broadband services to these very rural areas. The Margaretville Telephone Company is excited to play a role in this important community effort.”

“This unique technical solution to wireless connectivity could not have occurred without the county’s assistance to the ISPs. The county literally researched and mapped every road, providing ISPs exact addresses and locations. An unprecedented collaboration between government and private business”, notes Shaun Groden – County Administrator. “The availability of ARPA funds from the federal government makes this the perfect opportunity to invest in our infrastructure.”

Rachel Puckett, Executive Administrator and Director of Broadband Development for Mid-Hudson Cable states “Working directly with Greene County and other ISPs to identify the areas left behind has been a unique and personal experience as we all have the common goal of ensuring high-speed broadband internet is made available to unserved areas within Greene County. Mid-Hudson’s goal along with Greene County’s is to work toward closing the broadband availability gap that Greene County is currently facing and to anticipate further growth in the county while providing constituents reliable and affordable high-speed broadband service.”

“Spectrum is excited to extend our high-speed broadband network to additional Greene County residents, further building on our work that has connected 230 homes and small businesses since 2018. In partnership with the County, including its Economic Development Department, families will have access to gigabit speeds that facilitate remote work and learning. We look forward to finalizing project terms and starting this expansion” remarked Camille Joseph, GVP, State Government Affairs for Charter Communications.

Following the awards, the County will prepare contracts with each of the three ISPs which will include a timeframe for construction activities. It is anticipated that the ISPs will continue their existing network extensions as well as the build out of fiber optic lines with the County funds during the 2023 and 2024 construction seasons. The construction schedule is largely dictated by the “make ready” requirements of the local utility companies, which includes, engineering, surveying, licensing, and pole replacements. Construction may also be impacted by today’s challenges regarding supplies, inflation, and labor.

For more information on the Greene County Broadband Initiative including coverage maps, go to GreeneCountyBroadband.com.

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