



News from Livingston County, NY

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Empire Access and Livingston County Announce Receipt of Public-Private Partnership Grant *\$11.3 Million in Federal Funding for Broadband*

Geneseo, NY, July 6, 2021 — Thousands of addresses in Livingston County are slated for high-speed Internet access as part of a \$11.3 million grant award announced this week by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development Broadband ReConnect Program. The award was presented to Empire Access, a local Internet provider, which established a creative public-private partnership with Livingston County at the outset of the grant application process. Livingston County was a sponsor of the grant application and will provide match and seed capital for the effort.

The award is one of the first steps toward the County fulfilling its ambitious 'Light Up Livingston' initiative, which aims to offer high-speed, fiber-optic Internet to every address point in the county.

As part of the public-private partnership, Empire Access will own and operate hundreds of miles of a fiber optic network that will offer reliable, high-speed Internet access to the County's most underserved and unserved areas. Upon completion, household, farm, business and school addresses on the network will have access to 1 Gigabit-level Internet service. The fiber-to-the-premises network will be capable of delivering services of 100 Mbps to 10 Gbps depending on the need of the customer.

It is anticipated that the design and engineering of the network will be completed in 2021 and construction will begin in 2022.

U.S. Senator Charles Schumer said, “In today’s modern economy, access to reliable, fast internet service is crucial to success which is why I was proud to have helped secure this federal funding and advocated with USDA Secretary Vilsack for this award. The COVID-19 pandemic has pushed many New Yorkers online, making it all too clear that the digital gap in communities like Livingston County is far too wide. This USDA grant will ensure thousands of Livingston County families, businesses, farms, and students can access the top-notch, high-speed broadband they need. This is a game-changing investment to launch the ‘*Light Up Livingston*’ initiative, which aims to offer high-speed, fiber-optic Internet to every address point in the county.”

U.S. Congressman Chris Jacobs stated, “Expanding internet access is critical to unleashing the potential of our rural communities. Our world is increasingly moving online, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic. This grant moves us one step closer to closing the digital divide in Western New York. I commend the leadership in Livingston County for their hard work in securing this competitive grant.”

“Empire is excited to work with Livingston County on this USDA ReConnect grant project,” said **Jim Baase, Chief Operating Officer of Empire Access**. “This partnership will help accelerate the expansion of high-speed broadband in rural areas of the county and provide residents and businesses with access to state-of-the-art fiber optic Internet service.”

“We are beyond thrilled with this announcement from the USDA as broadband infrastructure continues to be a top priority for the Livingston County Board of Supervisors” stated **Chairman David L. LeFeber**. “We understand how critical this infrastructure is to the productivity, economic growth and quality of life in our rural county.”

County Administrator Ian M. Coyle said, “I would like to thank Empire Access for joining us in this unique public-private partnership. This broadband project will serve as a model for other New York State counties that want to spur development in rural communities and other places that have been neglected for too long.”

Angela Ellis, Deputy County Administrator, commented, “The COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced how important high-speed Internet access is to our rural residents and businesses. From telehealth to remote work to online learning, broadband has become an essential service for so many. We look forward to working with Empire Access on this transformative project. Together, we strive to close the gap in the digital divide that currently exists so that broadband is accessible to all.”

Bill Bacon, Director of Livingston County Economic Development, stated, “High speed connectivity to the home and workplace is a necessary commodity in today's economy. This award will help Livingston County position itself ahead of the curve in education, recreation and commerce by connecting our residents, visitors and workers to the resources that drive growth and prosperity.”

For more information on the USDA ReConnect award, please email broadband@co.livingston.ny.us, call 585-243-7550, or visit the ‘Light Up Livingston’ webpage at <https://www.livingstoncounty.us/LightUpLivingston>.

About Empire:

Empire Access is one of the area's leading telecommunications companies, providing the latest technology for communications. It is a family owned and operated company, and operates in New York and Pennsylvania. Today, Empire Access delivers communications services and solutions to a variety of customers ranging from residential, retail, manufacturing, wineries, banks, health care facilities, schools and law enforcement agencies. Empire Access offers a wide range of products and services from basic phone service to customized phone systems, scalable high-speed Internet, TV, dedicated circuits, and security system solutions to meet varied business needs. The company utilizes a 100 percent fiber optic connection to deliver service. In 2021, Empire Access was named Best Gaming Internet Service Provider in the Northeast by PC Mag. Visit the Empire Access website www.empireaccess.com.

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