

Greene County Lands \$24.7 Million Grant for Rural Broadband Expansion

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GREENE COUNTY – In a historic stride towards a connected and prosperous future, Greene County Economic Development (GCEDG) proudly shares the news of expanding fiber broadband services in Greene County.

GCEDG in conjunction with Frontier Communications is excited to announce the award of \$24.7 million from the Connect Illinois Grant Program to install a fast, reliable fiber network for the vast majority of rural Greene County. Under the grant program, the fiber installation project is to be completed within 24 months. Frontier also plans to install fiber internet in the city of Carrollton in 2024.

The total investment for all of these projects exceeds \$45 million. This initiative underscores the critical role of fiber broadband in enhancing agriculture, healthcare, business, education, and entrepreneurship in the county and the region.

Sponsored by the GCEDG, a team of citizens from Greene County has been working with Frontier Communications for almost three years to develop plans and projects to install fast, reliable, fiber internet to every home and business across Greene County.

At the end of April 2023, with the support and efforts of the Greene County Broadband team, Frontier Communications filed four grant applications with the Connect Illinois Grant Program. The households and citizens affected by this project will benefit greatly from high-quality, reliable fiber services from Frontier. Even more, these services will be provided at very competitive rates and speed tiers up to five gigabit/second symmetrical. Frontier's current product portfolio and pricing can be found at frontier.com.

With \$350 million appropriated for multiple rounds of competitive broadband matching grants, the Connect Illinois Program constitutes the largest state broadband matching grant program ever, and it provides the magnitude of funding needed for state-driven broadband ubiquity and lasting broadband equity.

Connect Illinois seeks to achieve what no other state or federal approach to date has accomplished: ubiquitous statewide broadband access for homes, businesses, and community anchor institutions throughout the state.

At the same time, Connect Illinois will promote digital literacy, adoption, and inclusion while leveraging investment in new broadband infrastructure to spur advances in such areas as economic development, education, precision agriculture, and telehealth.

This project will empower farmers with real-time data while supporting precision agriculture and smart technologies. From monitoring crop health to optimizing farm operations, broadband services will drive efficiency and sustainability in the agricultural sector.

This new fiber infrastructure will enable seamless communication between healthcare professionals and patients, expanding access to medical services in rural areas. Remote monitoring, digital health records, and virtual consultations become a reality, ensuring healthcare will no longer be constrained by geographic boundaries.

The Greene County fiber project will support economic growth and entrepreneurship by providing smooth communication, access to e-commerce platforms, and more efficient operations. Broadband services will empower enterprises, from startups to established businesses, to compete on a global scale and drive innovation.

Our local educational systems will benefit by transcending the boundaries of the classroom to ensure that students and educators can engage in online learning, access educational resources, and collaborate seamlessly. With expanded services for students and their families, this project will pave the way for a more inclusive future.

Broadband connectivity will be the lifeline that keeps families connected, informed, and entertained in our increasingly digital society. From streaming high-quality content to staying connected with loved ones, access to high-speed fiber will enhance the overall quality of life for families.

The applications for the Greene County broadband grants have been supported by Illinois state and federal legislators, the Greene County Board, and municipal/township leadership as well as with significant support from the citizens of Greene County.

Key support was also provided by the Illinois Office of Broadband and the University of Illinois Extension.

While some areas in Roodhouse and White Hall will gain access to the new fiber installation announced in this release, for now, much of those communities will continue to rely on currently available services. In addition, Rockbridge and some of the surrounding area will continue with the currently available services. GCEDG will continue working to ensure that all of the citizens of Greene County have access to modern, fast, reliable internet services. GCEDG is exploring alternatives that will serve those areas.

Everyone recognizes and anticipates the dramatic impact that fast, reliable fiber broadband will have on the lives and opportunities of families, businesses, and citizens across the county. This quantum leap in connectivity will catapult Greene County into the digital forefront, fostering economic development and innovation. We thank Frontier for their partnership and collaboration throughout this process. Together, we are enabling a bright future for Greene County.

For more information on our broadband, please contact Pat Pinkston, Greene County Economic Development Group Advisor by email at greenecountybroadbandproject@gmail.com.