

September 24, 2021

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Center Square

Pennsylvania lawmaker introduces bill to boost rural high-speed internet with \$100 million in federal cash

State Rep. Martin Causer, R-Annn Township, has introduced bipartisan legislation that would use federal stimulus funding to create additional high speed internet service in rural and underserved areas of Pennsylvania. House Bill 1766 would allocate \$100 million of federal funding to the Unserved High-Speed Broadband Funding Program. The program provides grants for projects that support broadband expansion in areas with the greatest need as defined by the Federal Communications Commission's minimum speed requirements and projects that have already received federal funding. "A lack of high-speed internet service puts rural communities – and the people who live there – at a significant disadvantage," Causer said in a news release. "Students have fewer tools to learn, businesses are less competitive and patients are further limited in their health care options. We need to make a serious commitment to extending broadband service across Commonwealth." The bill is under consideration in the House Consumer Affairs Committee. The legislation has 19 co-sponsors, a mix of Democrats and Republicans.

Beaver County Times

Broadband testing has begun in Beaver County

Testing has begun on Beaver County's broadband internet needs, especially in rural areas. Lance Grable, director of the county Office of Planning and Redevelopment and executive director for the Redevelopment Authority of Beaver County, said Michael Baker International representatives have visited over 2,200 homes in the county so far, testing internet speed and conducting surveys from residents about broadband. He said Michael Baker will determine where in the county needs new or additional broadband, and who has poor fixed or mobile internet. Grable said residents can still take the Beaver County broadband survey up until the end of October, which can be found at connectbeavercounty.com.

Greene County Messenger

Greene County awarded \$2.5M grant for broadband investment

The Appalachian Regional Commission has awarded a \$2.5 million grant to Greene County so broadband access can be expanded to hundreds of homes in three communities. The project will provide gigabit speed broadband access to more than 767 currently unserved or underserved homes in the areas around Graysville, New Freeport and Spraggs. It includes all or portions of six townships: Aleppo, Freeport, Gilmore, Perry, Springhill and Wayne. About 105 miles of fiber-optic cable will be installed. Increasing broadband access has been a priority among officials in Greene County and in other rural parts of Pennsylvania. Last year, more than \$3 million was put toward broadband improvements in Greene, using money from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act and capital investments from the telephone service company Windstream. The company is also putting forward \$2.7 million for the latest expansion of service, bringing the total cost to \$5.2 million.

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Treasury: 100 Mbps Symmetrical Is Table Stakes for Broadband Bucks

As expected, the Treasury Department has stuck with the program of tying broadband subsidy money to high speeds, and with a priority on municipal networks and a thumb on the scale for affordability. In its just-issued guidance for the COVID-19-related capital projects fund in the American Rescue Plan, Treasury outlined how the \$10 billion available to states for "high-quality broadband infrastructure as well as other connectivity infrastructure, devices, and equipment," should be spent and which providers would be eligible to get it. To get the money from a state (territory or tribal government), an ISP must deliver infrastructure that delivers 100 Mbps upload and download speeds, or, if that is impracticable, at least 100 Mbps download and no less than 20 Mbps upload.

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**Broadband Cable Association
of Pennsylvania**

