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Earlier this week, Service Electric customer Farouk Badawi walked into the tan-colored brick building at 1045 Hamilton St. in downtown Allentown to pay his bill. There was only one problem: The company's new customer care center there wasn't open yet. Badawi was, in fact, a week ahead of the grand opening. Still, the employees laughed it off, and took his payment anyway — their unofficial first customer.

Officially, Service Electric Cable TV & Communications will open its new customer care center on the building's first floor Monday. The center — open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday — gives the company a central location in downtown Allentown, providing a closer option for many customers to make payments, establish new services and swap, return and pick up equipment, among other offerings.

The opening also, in a way, is a homecoming of sorts. The Hamilton Street building, owned by Service Electric, has been a staple of the company for more than 50 years, housing various functions over the years. It was the company's original call center, payment center and

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TV2 studio. But as Service Electric grew, the company expanded to its current headquarters at 2260 Avenue A in Lehigh Valley Industrial Park I in Bethlehem. The TV2 staff, however, maintained a presence in the Hamilton Street building, though the studio's staff relocated to Bethlehem by early 2017.

That's about the time, in February 2017, when Service Electric began meeting to discuss renovations to the Hamilton Street building, according to Jennifer Brown, the company's regulatory affairs director. Brown said physical renovations began in April, mostly contained to internal construction with the exception of a new door and windows. – *Allentown Morning Call*

A Greene County state legislator who last week posted Pennsylvanians' Broadband Bill of Rights on her website has also co-founded a Broadband Caucus in the House to help expand rural residents' access to high-speed internet. [Democratic state Rep. Pam Snyder](#) put the bill of rights on her website along with the form used to file complaints with the state Public Utility Commission. The documents can be found under the "Featured News" section on [www.pahouse.com/Snyder](#).

Snyder, who has championed high-speed internet access for rural areas, said she was posting the information because many Pennsylvanians are not aware of their rights to quality service or how to file complaints about providers. "Few people know that under state law, they have the right to request and receive quality broadband from their local telephone company – and even fewer know that they can file an official complaint if that service is inadequate," she said. "These documents explain everything, including the state's broadband upload and download speed requirements, and I'm making them available on my website as a public service."

Also, Snyder and state [Rep. Kristin Phillips-Hill](#), R-York County, announced Friday that they have formed the Broadband Caucus in the House and are looking for colleagues who would like to join them in promoting legislation. "This is a one way to bring Democrats and Republicans together to tackle the lack of modern, high-speed internet, which puts 800,000 Pennsylvanians – including 520,000 in rural areas – behind the eight ball when it comes to competing economically and academically," Snyder said.

Snyder said rural areas with slow internet speeds have students unable to complete assignments at home and residents unable to take online classes, as well as companies hindered from moving to affected locations because of poor internet service. Other issues include telemedicine (live video conversations with physicians and medical providers) not being feasible and the local agricultural industry being placed at a competitive disadvantage, she said. "This is an issue that affects so many and creates challenges for all of Pennsylvania," Snyder said, "which is why we are asking other legislators to join us in this effort." Snyder and Phillips-Hill have partnered on a four-piece package of legislation addressing various aspects of high-speed internet service. – *Beaver County Times*

A plan to turn Pennsylvania Turnpike right of way into an information superhighway with high-speed, fiber-optic broadband internet has

begun unfolding, with completion expected in three to five years. Since October 2016, the turnpike commission has hired companies to provide legal and financial advice, developed a short list of the broadband network's potential developers/operators and hired companies to study potential environmental obstacles.

The turnpike has set up the project as a public-private partnership. That means the turnpike will provide the right of way where the network will run and receive 288 strands of the fiber-optic cable for its own use. The chosen private developer will have an unknown number of strands to sell space on its share of the network to others.

The turnpike projects the network will cost between \$250 million to \$300 million, but turnpike officials said the agency could break even by selling space on its strands. The private developer will gain the right to operate the system for at least 35 years. The turnpike is also seeking \$60 million in federal money. Most of the 550-mile turnpike runs east-west near the state's southern border, but about 110 miles stretch into Northeast Pennsylvania along an extension that starts near Norristown and ends in South Abington Twp. "The real advantage here is this will result in a major fiber-optic cable in some rural areas where it doesn't exist, just following the path of the turnpike," project manager Dale Witmer said.

The cable will likely lie on the side of the highway's shoulders, not in the median, another project manager, Neil Raup, said. As of a few years ago, Pennsylvania had more than 803,000 citizens — about 6 percent of its population — living in places without access to high-speed, broadband internet, according to the Federal Communications Commission. That includes more than 30,000 in Lackawanna County, 14 percent of its population; more than 17,500 in Luzerne County, or 5 percent; more than 24,500 in Wayne County, 45 percent; 3,400 in Wyoming County, 12 percent; more than 27,200 in Susquehanna County, 66 percent; almost 1,500 in Monroe County, 1 percent; and more than 600 in Pike County, 1 percent.

The turnpike also needs the project to connect its toll plazas with central computers and to replace its radio system because its digital microwave system is nearing capacity, spokesman Carl DeFebo said. Barry L. Denk, director of the Center for Rural Pennsylvania, which recently hosted a hearing on broadband internet access, had not heard of the turnpike initiative, but praised it. Anything that expands access helps, he said.

The turnpike has already committed to spend \$5.45 million. In February, the agency raised its contract for financial advice with Ernst & Young US LLP to a maximum of \$1.6 million, up \$700,000 from an earlier estimate. The commission also increased the contract for legal advice with Hunton & Williams LLP and McNees, Wallace and Nurick LLC to \$1.35 million, up \$450,000. Turnpike officials said they had to increase the amounts because the workload turned out larger than expected.

Earlier this month, the commission hired A.D. Marble & Co. and Rettew Associates for \$1.25 million each to study the network's potential environmental effects. Federal environmental clearances are expected by the end of the year. In September or October, the turnpike expects

to choose the network's private operator to design, build and maintain it.

The four companies on the short list are Keystone Broadband Partners (AECOM); Keystone Broadband Partners (Star America/ Zayo Group); Penn FiberWay; and Plenary Broadband Infrastructure. Each group has multiple companies aiding the development of its proposals. –

Scranton Times-Tribune

Google is aiming to improve the quality of ad-supported content in its Google Preferred program by adding inventory from YouTube TV, a streaming service that packages a host of popular TV channels. Adding TV inventory will likely appease some advertisers who are still concerned about the quality of YouTube content. Over the past year many brands have discovered their ads had appeared alongside videos deemed unsafe or controversial. Google Preferred, which includes content from the most popular 5% of YouTube channels, has not been immune from brand safety controversies.

The move to add premium TV content will be part of Google's pitch to marketers on Thursday as part of the annual digital ad sales season known as the NewFronts. During the weeklong event companies such as Vice, Oath and Twitter make presentations to marketers in an attempt to secure advertising commitments for their upcoming slates of programming. The firms are also trying to lure in TV ad dollars just weeks ahead of the annual TV "Upfronts," when TV networks preview new programming for the coming season and year.

Adding more premium content to Google Preferred is the latest step by Google to bolster its service. It has already adopted stricter ad policies, hired more human reviewers and given brands more control over where their ads appear. YouTube TV carries well-known channels owned by the likes of NBCUniversal, CBS Corp., 21st Century Fox and Walt Disney Co. Google will have access to a percentage of the two minutes per hour of local commercial space that cable TV distributors typically sell in place of the TV networks. "Having more premium content, and access to more popular content, was always of interest to our advertisers," said Debbie Weinstein, managing director for YouTube/Video Global Solutions. "We're continuing to invest in making it great."

YouTube is also making some changes to its video ad offerings. The company for years has resisted advertising on TV screens, touting its ability to reach young consumers through mobile devices. Now, the Google-owned video giant is making it possible for advertisers to buy YouTube video ads on the TV screen only, acknowledging a shift in video consumption to the more traditional medium. "For the past four to five years, it's been all about the shift to mobile," said Ms. Weinstein. "Now, we're in the midst of the next big revolution. Users are spending more and more time with the TV screen."

But they're not consuming YouTube on TV in the same way they'd consume traditional content on cable, said Ms. Weinstein. Rather, they're accessing YouTube on TV through their gaming console or smart TV, or casting their mobile device onto their TV. TV screens are YouTube's fastest growing screen, with over 150 million hours of watch time per day, she said. Still, that's small compared to the amount of time users spend with mobile content. About a year ago, YouTube said that watch time on mobile was about 1 billion hours per

day. Advertisers will be able to buy the inventory through AdWords and DoubleClick Bid Manager. – *Wall Street Journal*



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