



## MADISON COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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### **Madison County Begins Construction of New Rural Broadband Network**

**Sullivan, NY** – “This day has been over five years in the making,” said Madison County Board Chairman John M. Becker. Construction of the Madison County Rural Broadband Network has finally started. Madison County has been working to bring broadband access to those unserved and underserved since 2019. Today, the first hut, which will house the new broadband network, was placed in the Town of Sullivan.



The Madison County Rural Broadband Network will bring high-speed (100 Mbps x 100 Mbps) internet to 1,087 unserved households and businesses in Madison County. Some 269 miles of fiber will also bring service to another 6,504 homes. Madison County will own the fiber network, and has partnered with Empire Access to provide the broadband service to the unserved areas, as well as become a major competitor in the County to areas that are already served by other telecommunications companies.

In 2021, Madison County was a recipient of a USDA ReConnect Grant totaling about \$12.8 million. The full project will cost \$18.6 million, with a \$3.4 million match from Madison County and \$2.4 million investment from Empire Access. Madison County has worked diligently with our partners at the USDA, New York Engineering Services, ECC Technologies, and Empire Access to make this project a reality.

“The Madison County Rural Broadband Project will bring reliable high-speed internet to thousands in our community,” said Chairman Becker. “We are excited to place the first hut here in the Town of Sullivan. Reliable internet service is a necessity to connect people to not only each other but healthcare, mental health services, education, and more. Madison County saw a need in our community and we wanted to provide this essential service to our residents. Thank you to everyone who has worked so hard for the past five years to make today a reality, including Senator Schumer, Director Murray, County Administrator Scimone, Empire Access,

New York Engineering Services, ECC Technologies, and the great staff we have at Madison County. We still have a long road ahead of us, but this is a historic day for Madison County.”



“For far too long, communities throughout Upstate New York – including those in Madison County – have struggled to close the digital divide. Today, the groundbreaking of Madison County’s new Rural Broadband Network marks the beginning of a new era in connectivity for county residents, ensuring that thousands of underserved households, businesses, and farms can reap the benefits of a robust, high-speed internet,” said U.S. Senator of New York Charles Schumer. “In our modern economy, access to reliable, fast internet service is crucial to success in everything

from work to school to getting the healthcare you need. That is why I fought tooth and nail to secure the more than \$12 million in federal funding needed to connect homes and businesses from Sullivan to Hamilton and across the county, so that our families, businesses, farms, and students can access the top-notch, high-speed broadband they need. Today’s groundbreaking represents a major step forward in our commitment to bridge the digital divide and empower residents with the tools they need to thrive in the 21st century.”

“At USDA Rural Development, we are working each day to close the digital divide across rural America,” USDA Rural Development NY State Director Brian Murray said. “Thanks to President Biden’s Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the ReConnect program is delivering on building brighter futures – starting right here in Madison County. The ReConnect program is expanding entrepreneurial opportunities and connecting businesses to new markets; it is helping to bring new and exciting educational opportunities to rural students; and it is connecting rural patients to the medical professionals and treatments they may need.”

“We are excited to finally get started,” said CEO of Empire Access James Baase. “This has taken five years, we cannot wait to bring competition and service to unserved and underserved residences in Madison County. These are the types of communities that fit well with Empire Access. I want to thank everyone for making Empire part of this project.”

“New York Engineering Services has been privileged to partner with a client that has a clear vision for bringing high speed internet to meet the needs of Madison County citizens,” said New York Engineering Services President and Owner Bart Bretsch. “The Madison County Broadband Team has both the will and the drive to ensure that they will be great stewards of this fiber optic project and leverage New York Engineering Services design, fielding, work prints and construction management talents to the fullest. It is an exciting time to live in Madison County!”

“Thank you to all those who have worked so hard on this project,” said Madison County Administrator Mark Scimone. “Madison County set out over five years ago for the facts about who in our community truly had access to reliable high-speed internet. We partnered with ECC Technologies to get an accurate picture of broadband in our community. Our society revolves around being online, whether it is for school, health care, or even for fun. Everyone deserves the

opportunity to be able to access high-speed, reliable internet. When this project is complete, thousands of Madison County residents will have access.

The construction of the 269 miles of fiber optic cable, purchased from Graybar, will take about two years to complete. As fiber is laid, the residents and businesses in that community will be able to connect. They will not have to wait until the full project is complete. There are three phases to the construction of the network. Phase 1 will include Sullivan, Chittenango, Lenox, Canastota, Lincoln, Oneida, Stockbridge, Fenner, Cazenovia, and Smithfield. The network is beginning in the northern half of the County in order to connect to Empire Access' network in Onondaga County. To view the other two phases, please go to:

<https://www.madisoncounty.ny.gov/2765/Madison-County-ReConnect-Broadband-Proje>.

Chairman Becker was joined at the ceremony by USDA Rural Development NY State Director Brian Murray, CEO of Empire Access James Baase, a representative from U.S. Senator Charles Schumer's Office, New York Senator Joseph Griffo, New York Assemblyman Brian Miller, Madison County Administrator Mark Scimone, Director of Broadband Development at ECC Technologies Andy Lukasiewicz, Town of Lenox Supervisor John Pinard, Town of Hamilton Supervisor Eve Ann Shwartz, and City of Oneida Supervisor Joseph Magliocca.

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