

Press Release

To: Bradford Era

From: McKean County

Date: September 15, 2020

Re: McKean County Broadband Improvement Project

The McKean County Commissioners recently approved a project that will significantly improve access to high speed internet service throughout McKean County, with a focus on areas that are currently unserved or underserved.

This project funded through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Securities Act (CARES Act) is on a very tight schedule. The project is currently in the design and engineering phase, with equipment installation expected to start in October and be completed by December 31, 2020.

Improved access to broadband will improve access to on-line learning and telemedicine services, allow more residents to work from home when needed, and support e-commerce activities. Due to these factors, broadband access has been an important issue for the County for several years. To address this issue, the County Commissioners formed a Broadband Taskforce that has been working to identify ways to improve access to high-speed internet. The funding provided through the CARES Act has provided the County with resources needed to implement some of the plans developed by the Broadband Taskforce.

The County Commissioners, Economic Development, Planning, GIS, IT, 911 & Emergency Services Departments are working with CONXXNE, who has been contracted by the County to provide engineering, network design, and oversee construction of the network for this project. CONXXNE is a Technology Transfer Company that has completed similar projects throughout PA, MD, NY, and DE. The County is also currently working with the State Police, Game Commission, PennDOT, school districts, municipalities, and other local and regional partners to keep this project moving forward.

The Network that will be built will include carrier grade wireless technology that will provide data transmission speeds of 25 – 100 mbps per second. This is faster than the speeds many county residents currently receive and will provide much needed access to high speed internet for those in the county who currently have limited to no broadband connectivity.

During the design phase of the project, the County will continue to collect data regarding the connectivity, speed, and availability of internet service throughout McKean County. This data is being collected through an on-line survey which can be accessed at: <https://arcg.is/1zbD5a>. The survey only takes a few minutes to complete and will provide the County with valuable data for this project. The survey is open to all residents of the County, but we especially want it to be

completed by anyone who feels that they are unserved or underserved, as the survey is one of the resources that will be used to try to identify targeted service areas for the network. Surveys should be completed by the end of the day on September 25th.

“The Coronavirus pandemic made it clear that something had to be done to improve broadband access in rural areas like McKean County. During the statewide shutdown in the Spring, many students weren’t able to fully participate in on-line coursework, employees weren’t able to work remotely, and local businesses weren’t able to provide on-line services due to lack of high-speed internet. The funding provided through the CARES Act will allow us to make a significant investment to solve this issue. The County is very appreciative to have access to these funds” said Commissioner Duffy.