

Yates County ReConnect Fiber-to-the-Premise Broadband Network Project Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

What is this project?

The Yates County ReConnect Project is funded by a USDA/RUS ReConnect grant for construction of a gigabit capable fiber optic broadband network to reach unserved/underserved premises in the County. Rural Utility Service (RUS) is an agency within the USDA that provides much-needed infrastructure or infrastructure improvements to rural communities. In March 2020, Yates County was awarded the grant -- the first municipality in NYS and one of the first in the nation to receive funding in this first round of the RUS ReConnect Grants. The \$14M project includes the RUS grant monies and a required 25% match from Yates County (\$3,489,125).

Who's included?

The Proposed Funded Service Area (PFSA) of the project are the areas that were approved by RUS for build-out using the grant monies. See the maps on yatesconnect.org for the current PFSA's. It is estimated that there are 1635 premises within the PFSA's.

Why isn't my house included?

There are very specific RUS definitions of what premises can and cannot be included.

- Unserved / underserved is defined as <10Mbps download and <1Mbps upload.
- It cannot be in an area that previously received Grant monies (state or federal).
- 90% of the premises in the area must be unserved/underserved to be included.

Yates County is applying for additional federal and state funding to expand the ReConnect network to reach the NFSAs premises that are adjacent to this network e.g. across the street or along the network (NFSAs = non-funded service areas which are not eligible to build to using our ReConnect grant monies).

Who will be the operator of the network?

It was determined that it was in the County's best interest not to be a telecommunications operator of the installed network, but rather look to partner with an existing internet Service Provider (ISP). The County has reached a multi-year services agreement with Empire Access. This public-private arrangement builds upon the best of each organization. The final agreement provides a mutually beneficial business arrangement for the operation of the network, with Yates County retaining the ownership of the network.

What are the steps of the project? For much of the Summer 2021 the project will be in the engineering design phase. Yates County has contracted with New York Engineering Services (NYES) who will be responsible to finalize the network design and then to provide oversight during the Construction phase. This design process started in May and NYES employees may be seen driving around the County doing fielding work – taking measurements along roads and near premises to be connected. NYES is leaving door hangers on the premises in the grant funded area. Once the engineering Plans and Specifications are finalized, the project will move into a bid process to secure the Construction firm who will do the actual build. The goal is to start construction Fall 2021.

When will my house get connected? Construction and customer connections will proceed in phases and once those are determined, residents will be able to track status and progress on the County's ReConnect internet site at yatesconnect.org and on Empire Access's website at www.empireaccess.com.

Who do I call if I have questions?

If you have a general question about the County's current ReConnect project or future projects, contact Dan Long at 315-536-5543 or dlong@yatescounty.org or Marian Walrath at 315-531-3213 or mwalrath@yatescounty.org. For questions about surveyors in the field contact the NYES Resident Engineer at 315-536-5111. For questions about signing up for service to your premise contact Empire Access at 800-338-3300 or www.empireaccess.com.

I see different trucks working on the telephone poles (Spectrum, Frontier, Empire Access, etc). Is this part of the ReConnect project?

These Spectrum, Frontier, Empire Access vehicles are not part of the ReConnect project. However starting in May 2021 New York Engineering Services (NYES) vehicles are roaming the County working on the ReConnect project. These vehicles have NYES logos on the side and the employees carry NYES badges. Feel free to contact them with any questions at 315-536-5111.

How do I sign up for service?

Empire Access will be proactively sending out communications as an area is close to be ready for customer connection. You can connect Empire Access at any time to check on status, register your interest and eventually to sign up. The Empire Access customer service number is 800-338-3300 or see their website at www.empireaccess.com.

Spectrum has recently established service in my area and I'm wondering if there is any downside to obtaining service from them before the County project is completed?

There is no downside to getting service today from Spectrum.....Spectrum has no contracts and you can switch anytime.