

News and Press Releases



CBN Connect is Incorporated

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In its new capacity as a private, not-for-profit corporation, CBN Connect Inc. is moving forward to bring a state-of-the-art open access fiber optic network to Clinton, Essex and Franklin counties and will seek construction funding through the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act.

The concept for what would become CBN Connect Inc. began in the community.

"It was started by the Industrial Development Agencies of Clinton, Essex and Franklin counties and the Town of Plattsburgh," said Howard Lowe, director of economic development at the Technical Assistance Center at SUNY Plattsburgh (TAC) and president of the new not-for-profit. "They asked TAC to manage the project."

Over the course of five years, TAC documented the demand for better broadband service and secured funding to plan and design the network.

"Once some of the foundation work was done, it was time to return oversight of the initiative to the community," said Lowe.

"In order to be certified as a telecommunications provider by the New York State Public Service Commission, CBN Connect needed to be a legal entity," Lowe explained.

TAC worked with the Research Foundation of the State University of New York to set up the new corporation, which is governed by representatives from the communities it serves. CBN Connect was incorporated in December 2008.

One of CBN Connect's first objectives is to partner with the Research Foundation, which received \$7.6 million to connect health care providers, hospitals and colleges through the Adirondack-Champlain Telemedicine Information Network (ACTION). Ideally, construction of the CBN Connect and ACTION fiber optic networks will be done cooperatively, allowing both initiatives to more efficiently and cost-effectively reach their objectives, according to Julie West, the former TAC project coordinator who is the executive director of CBN Connect Inc.

The Research Foundation funding was made available through the Federal Communications Commission Rural Health Care Pilot Program. The program's goal is to start building toward a national healthcare network that would link all providers together so rural hospitals can benefit from specialized expertise they might not have access to otherwise.

"Since the healthcare institutions reside along CBN Connect's planned core network route, it makes sense for the two initiatives to work together," said West.

CBN Connect Inc. will not compete with for-profit telecommunication service providers. In fact, CBN Connect seeks to help for-profit providers reach areas that they may not have been able to serve due to cost by creating an "open" infrastructure they can all use.

"The CBN Connect goal is to see an expansion of high speed, state-of-the-art broadband throughout the North Country as soon as practical," said CBN Connect Board Chair Donald Caldera, who represents the Adirondack North Country Association Board. "The mission is to both enhance quality of life here by making this communication advance available to the whole area and, most important, to stimulate jobs and community growth that can enhance the local economy and its people."

CBN Connect Inc. is a private, not-for-profit corporation formed as a strategic alliance by the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe, the Adirondack North Country Association, and the Research Foundation of SUNY (in cooperation with SUNY Plattsburgh). The corporation is governed by a board of directors consisting of individuals representing the three organizations as well as TAC staff and members of the community.

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