



## Study: Broadband needed in park

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QUEENSBURY -- A recently completed study sheds light on the need for broadband access in the Adirondack Park, said Warren County Board of Supervisors Chairman Fred Monroe.

The study found the median age of residents inside the park's boundary to be 43, older than the median age of any state in the nation, Monroe said Wednesday at a forum on broadband access held at Adirondack Community College.

"If present trends continue, the only place older than the Adirondacks will be the west coast of Florida," he said.

One of the reasons younger people are leaving the region is because of limited telecommunications and Internet services, said U.S. Rep. Scott Murphy, D-Glens Falls, who organized the two-hour forum.

Local government officials and business leaders are hoping federal stimulus funding can help change the paradigm.

CBN Connect, a nonprofit organization affiliated with the State University of New York, submitted an application Wednesday for \$22 million in stimulus funding to build a broadband system in Clinton, Essex and Franklin counties, said Howard Lowe, president of CBN Connect.

Broadband is a communications network that can be divided and shared by multiple simultaneous signals for high-speed Internet, voice and video.

The funding would be about half grant and half loan.

If successful, the network could be up and running in about a year, linking 26 communities, including Ticonderoga, with so-called "middle mile" broadband access.

That means a broadband connection would reach every community, but not necessarily every home.

Private companies would run their lines along the network and connect to individual homes and businesses.

In the next week or two, CBN Connect will begin an analysis of expanding the network to Warren and Hamilton counties, and possibly Washington County.

The goal is to have the analysis and subsequent design work completed in time to submit a second application for the final round of stimulus funding in March.

CBN Connect would build the infrastructure for private telecommunications companies to use, similar to the concept of a municipal airport, Lowe said.

Joe Calzone, vice president of ION, a joint venture of 13 rural telephone companies, said he has coined a new term, "coopetition," to define the concept.

Having the network in place reduces overhead costs so multiple companies can bring services to rural areas and compete, he explained.

Murphy, a venture capitalist before his election to Congress in March, reflected on his first business venture, an Internet fantasy sports gaming company he founded in his living room in 1994.

"A lot of people couldn't start that business in their living room in the 20th District because they don't have the infrastructure to get connected to the Internet," he said.

Broadband is important for tourism and emergency preparedness, said Sharon Cates-Williams, deputy chief information officer for the state Office for Technology.

When a bridge collapsed in Minneapolis in 2007, cell phone service was jammed because of the huge call volume.

A newly built broadband system that hadn't even been tested was turned on, and rescue workers were able to communicate and use GPS devices.

"Broadband did that. Broadband helped them recover," she said.

Congress should consider establishing a permanent broadband program, because funding in the stimulus package will not be enough to meet the need for years to come, said Thomas Jenson, the northeast regional field representative for the U.S. Department of Agriculture rural utilities office.

"Two years from now, this needs some further action. And I don't think America has an appetite for a second stimulus package," he said.

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