

# TIMES UNION

## Cuomo touts progress of broadband expansion

Six upstate counties selected for 100 Mbps service by mid-2017

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Published 10:16 pm, Wednesday, August 3, 2016

Hudson

Columbia County is among six upstate counties selected for the 100-megabit-per-second broadband internet network run by Charter Communications. Unserved areas will be added by mid-2017 as part the conditions of the state's approval of its merger with telecommunications giant Time Warner Cable, the state said Wednesday.

Other counties among the first to be selected include Erie, Jefferson, Onondaga, Oswego and Sullivan. The plans are for the "vast majority" of Charter's franchise area across those counties to have the high-speed internet by that mid-2017 target time, according to the state.

A requirement that Charter add 145,000 homes to its network that are not currently reached by Time Warner for no charge to consumers was previously announced as part of the merger deal with the state [Public Service Commission](#).

Charter also plans to make 100 Mbps broadband available for more than 2 million homes across upstate by early 2017, which is roughly two years ahead of the schedule devised under the original conditions of the state's approval, PSC Chair Audrey Zibelman said at an announcement in Hudson.

Meanwhile, Gov. [Andrew Cuomo](#) touted the state's commitment to make broadband, which he likens to the interstate highway system in the 1950s, [available statewide in 2018](#) Plans call for 100 Mbps broadband being made available for much of the state and 25 Mbps broadband available for the state's most remote areas.

As part of those plans, the state is offering funding for telecom companies to assist with expanding their broadband reach. As such, on Wednesday, \$54.2 million in state funding, in addition to \$21.6 million in private investment, was announced for 14 smaller communications companies that offer services upstate.

A **request for proposals** for another round of funding also was released. A third round is scheduled for early 2017 to address remaining unaddressed areas, Cuomo's office said.

"Today with the high-speed internet, if you have it, whether you're in Columbia County or Buffalo or Rochester or sitting in the middle of Manhattan, in a lot of ways it doesn't make a difference because you are just as accessible, you can communicate with as many people, you can get anywhere so to speak on the internet," Cuomo told reporters. "What has happened for many years is the inverse has been true. If you don't have high-speed internet, you're just out of the loop. And it actually hurt places like the Hudson Valley."

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