

# Company maps 3 broadband providers

By Katie Kocijanski

Columbia-Greene Media - October 5, 2016

HUDSON — Columbia County's progress toward better broadband service for its estimated 68,000 residents continues to move forward.

F. Michael Tucker, the president/CEO of the Columbia Economic Development Corporation, updated members of the county's broadband subcommittee recently on continuing the mapping of its internet providers in the county.

A series of three preliminary maps were created by the Stockport-based cartographer Don Meltz Planning and GIS.

"Using data from the National Broadband Map website, he mapped the service areas of the eight broadband service providers found in Columbia County," Tucker said. "He used data from the state's broadband program to map the census blocks in the county that have been identified as unserved or underserved."

The providers identified in the maps are Mid-Hudson Cable, Time Warner Cable, Cablevision/Optimum, GTel Teleconnections, FairPoint Communications, Verizon New York, Frontier Communications and Lightower.

Meltz included statistics based solely on the state's broadband program census block data which include 36,000 residents who are considered to be underserved or unserved in the county.

Tucker said Meltz has worked for 14 of the towns and villages in the county to some extent on their comprehensive plans, usually in partnership with fellow planner Nan Stolzenburg.

In early August, Governor Andrew Cuomo visited Hudson to announce that Columbia County will receive \$2.5 million for broadband upgrades and new service, as part of the "Broadband for All" initiative.

In this round of funding, \$8,720,560 is being given to State Telephone Company Inc. based out of Coxsackie, \$2,512,562 to Germantown Telephone Company and \$1,009,339 to Mid-Hudson Data Corp., which serves Columbia, Greene and southern Albany counties.

Launched in March, the state plan aims to provide high-speed internet access for all of New York State by the end of 2018.

"Two years ago, the county hired ECC Technologies out of the Rochester area to start the mapping process, it was around the same time the state came out with its own broadband plan," Tucker said. "Matt Murrell created the broadband subcommittee at the beginning of the year."

The maps do not show Charter Communications territory, which is found mostly in the towns of Ghent and Chatham, according to Tucker.

While the switchover from Charter to Time Warner Cable is still pending for customers, individual franchise maps have to be gathered for the project.

In September, the corporation was appointed by Murrell, the chairman of the Columbia County Board of Supervisors to be the county's broadband coordinator. It would take the lead role to continue the ongoing efforts to bring broadband access, adoption, and use to all corners of the county.

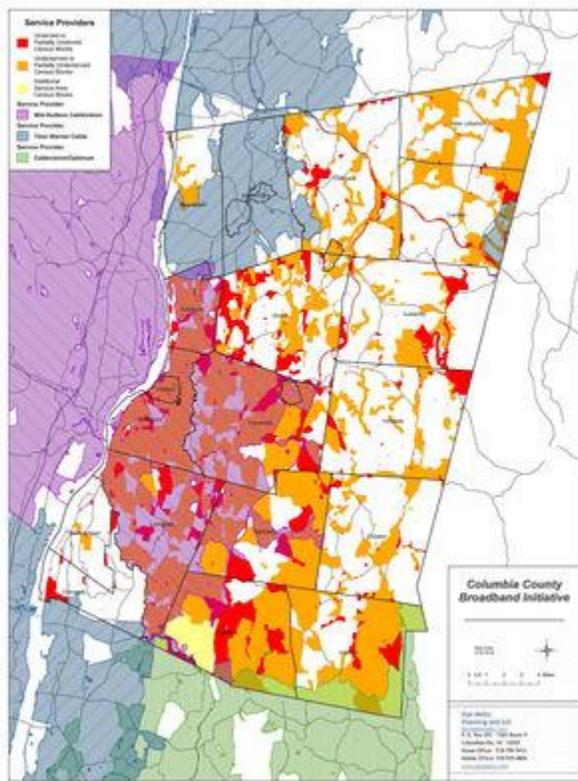
Town Supervisor Peter Cipkowski, D-Hillsdale, remains optimistic about the future of internet accessibility in the county and the new state initiative. There are sections of Hillsdale where there is limited access to broadband.

“There are many independent businesses and contractors who work from home like myself and have experienced a break down in communications,” Cipkowski said. “We primarily have FairPoint out here and the service is inconsistent.”

Cipkowski said the way he looks at broadband is it is the foundation for economic growth in all of the towns in the county and it is a utility people need.

As a member of the broadband subcommittee, the supervisor said he is “grateful the state has been putting some teeth behind the initiative and it gives businesses incentive to choose from multiple providers and options in the future.”

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3 images

Map of one of three broadband providers in Columbia County