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Southern Tier Network FAQs

Q: What is Southern Tier Network?

A: Southern Tier Network is a new not-for-profit, local development corporation (LDC) established to own, build and manage a \$12.2 million regional fiber optic backbone that will enable access to the highest speed broadband connectivity available in Chemung, Schuyler and Steuben Counties.

Q: How was the Southern Tier Network formed?

A: The Southern Tier Central Regional Planning and Development Board (STC) has been working for several years to make fiber available in our region. As part of those efforts, STC applied for federal funding from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), but received disappointing news in September 2010. STC's bid for funding, which had reached the final stages, was denied because NTIA did not have sufficient resources to fund the project. In addition, an application to Google's 2010 "Think Big with a Gig" Fiber for Communities grant program has been put on hold by Google. In the wake of these events, the planning board decided to

move forward with its plan to create a fiber optic infrastructure. STC continued its efforts to secure the funding and partners necessary to launch the initiative, and has been joined by Chemung, Schuyler and Steuben Counties, ECC Technologies, Inc., and Corning Incorporated to form Southern Tier Network. Today, a board of directors is in place, comprised of representatives from the three counties and other community stakeholders.

Q: Why is this network being built?

A: The mission is to address the broadband needs of unserved areas in the community, improve services in underserved areas and enhance the overall telecommunications services for the Southern Tier region. The optical fiber backbone will be open to any viable entity for use in supporting the creation and delivery of technologies and services. The Southern Tier Network board believes that this network will be a catalyst for future economic development within the region, and that it will drive new and improved capabilities including 4G wireless and fiber-to-the-home and fiber-to-the-premises services.

Q: Who can access the network?

A: Southern Tier Network will lease capacity on the network to telecommunication carriers, governments, educational institutions and healthcare organizations, as well as other commercial and industrial businesses.

Q: Does this network compete with existing networks in the tri-county region?

A: No. The business will focus on partnerships with service providers and encourage their use of the optical fiber backbone to expand competitive services throughout the region and into the more rural areas. The Southern Tier Network business plan mirrors the successful and nationally recognized model now operational in Ontario County, NY. The Ontario County fiber ring is a model for rural communities seeking broadband access, and was implemented and facilitated by ECC Technologies, Inc., STC's technical partner in the Southern Tier Network initiative.

Q: How will this network impact current regional enterprise, carrier and other customers?

A: The backbone will be open to any viable entity to use in providing services to support the proliferation of technologies and services. The network is meant to complement the established carrier infrastructure so as not to devalue the existing investments in our communities.

Q: What are the benefits of this network?

A: The new broadband infrastructure offers significant benefits to the region including:

- State-of-the-art telecommunications technology that will enable significantly greater bandwidth and the highest available connectivity speeds
- Connecting public safety towers and 911 centers
- Making fiber available to rural areas
- Enabling future development of wireless capabilities such as “fiber-to-the-home,” “fiber-to-the-premises” and widespread availability of 4G service
- Global competitiveness

Q: When will the network construction start and when will it be completed?

A: Construction is expected to begin by June 2011 on the 235-mile optical fiber backbone, and will take approximately 30 months to complete.

Q: Will taxes go up in these areas as a result of the network?

A: The intention is to create a self-sustaining network in which enterprise, carrier and other customers that desire to manage and control their own telecommunications networks pay for access to the optical fiber network.

Q: Who is paying for this project?

A: The project has received funding commitments from Corning Incorporated and each of the three participating counties. The Corning Incorporated investment of \$10 million will cover the projected capital costs for the project, which will use Corning fiber and cables as specified during the final design phases. Financial support pledged from the three counties will provide ongoing annual operating expenses of Southern Tier Network until it achieves sustainability in 2014. The Counties have committed the following amounts: Chemung - \$789,947, Schuyler - \$188,370 and Steuben - \$1,227,786. In exchange for this financial support, each of the counties will use the new network to reduce existing communications costs for public safety and interoffice communications.

Q: Will Corning Incorporated own this network?

A: No. The network will be owned, built and managed by Southern Tier Network, a not-for-profit Local Development Corporation (LDC), solely for the citizens of Chemung, Schuyler and Steuben counties.

Q: Will residents benefit directly from the open access network?

A: Southern Tier Network will not serve residents directly. Rather, STC will supply *access* to the new optical fiber network, not Internet connectivity itself. When the fiber ring is complete, telecommunication service providers who lease access to the network should be able to expand their systems' reach and better meet the connectivity needs of their respective customers, even in rural areas.