

\$3 million+ partnership brings next-generation broadband to Macon County, Alabama

A new partnership pools government, private, and philanthropic funds to build fiber internet for county residents and businesses

TUSKEGEE, ALABAMA, UNITED STATES, May 3, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A next-generation fiber broadband network has been completed in east central Alabama thanks to a partnership between the Macon County Economic Development Authority (MCEDA), Rural LISC, Connect Humanity, and rural internet service provider, Point Broadband.

The organizations have come together to raise \$3.1 million, including state and federal grants, to fund a fiber broadband network that significantly improves internet service in the county, where, until now, more than 40% of households have not had access to a wired or fixed-wireless connection at broadband speeds (25 Mbps) according to FCC data, and even more households have struggled to afford it, according to a recent census survey.

To change this, Point Broadband has built a new network that expands access to almost 1,400 additional Macon County homes, as well as businesses and community institutions like libraries and educational and healthcare facilities. The network offers access to better service, lower costs, and 'gigabit' speeds up-to forty times as fast as the best alternatives on offer.



Engineers from Point Broadband lay fiber in Macon County, Alabama



Engineers attaching networking equipment to telephone poles

For MCEDA, which led the initiative, the project provides a transformative opportunity to drive long-term economic growth and improve the well-being of residents. Joe Turnham, Director at MCEDA said: “We’re building broadband fit for the future and the County is already realizing the benefits. From healthcare innovation at Tuskegee University to \$140+ million in economic impact from the area’s newest jobs-engine — Tuskegee Commerce Park — this network is bringing opportunity to businesses and families across Macon County.”

The network has secured a number of early [wins for the area](#), including helping attract a new auto parts manufacturing facility and [enabling a partnership](#) between Tuskegee University and telehealth company OnMed, providing remote care on campus for students, faculty, and the wider Macon County community.

David Ficken, Point Broadband’s Vice President for Strategic Growth said, “Point Broadband is pleased to join MCEDA in this innovative partnership that combines community focus, world-class technology, and funding to bring broadband to Macon County and other neighboring communities. Point Broadband is committed to improving lives through fiber technology across the country and it’s very satisfying to make such a big impact right here at home.”

Point has entered into a community benefits agreement with the County, with safeguards and reporting requirements to ensure the network continues to provide quality, affordable service to residents, businesses, and community institutions along the project route. The agreement establishes a committee that will work to meet Macon County’s connectivity needs over the long term.

Brian Vo, Chief Investment Officer at Connect Humanity said: “Macon County is showing that it’s possible to build gold-standard internet service in rural and low-income communities. When willing partners come together to invest, we can build networks that meet the needs of families and businesses — and that are financially sustainable over the long term. This investment isn’t just for broadband infrastructure; it’s for improved health, more access to economic opportunities, and, ultimately, greater wealth creation for the community. Connect Humanity is excited to be part of it.

The project leverages public investment and philanthropic grants to secure private capital from investors who might otherwise see such projects as too high risk. This ‘blended capital’ approach stretches the impact of state and federal broadband subsidies and ultimately leads to more infrastructure being built and more families being connected.

“Rural LISC is thrilled to be part of the change that brings much needed broadband infrastructure to thriving rural communities like the one in Macon County,” said Caitlin Cain, LISC Vice President and Rural LISC Director. “Unique public-private partnerships have proven to be instrumental in catalyzing large-scale change that strengthens education, workforce opportunities, access to telehealth and a host of other benefits that directly support rural-based

community investment.”

MCEDA Director Joe Turnham, added: “The project has brought together a phenomenal collaboration of diverse partners, from the State of Alabama, Utilities Board of Tuskegee to Point Broadband, Rural LISC, and Connect Humanity. The journey has been rewarding, and underlines the opportunity for public-private partnerships to provide impactful connectivity in challenging rural environments. From the businesses being served — including Samkee America, Inc., and our new logistics park — to the many families now able to access world-class connectivity, this project is generationally transformational for our community. Thanks go out to all our stakeholders who helped make this happen.”

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About Macon County Economic Development Authority

The Macon County Economic Development Authority (MCEDA), established by a legislative act of the Alabama Legislature, is designated as the official entity responsible for fostering economic development, investment, and industry in Macon County. The MCEDA is governed by a board of directors consisting of members appointed by various municipalities in Macon County and by Tuskegee University, Macon County Board of Education, the Chamber of Commerce and legislative delegation of Macon County. www.madeinmacon.com

About Point Broadband

Point Broadband, headquartered in Opelika, AL, was founded in 2017 with the mission of delivering a superior broadband solution to consumers and businesses in small-town USA and rural America. Focused on the communities it serves and providing best-in-class customer care, Point Broadband currently operates in nine states across the U.S. and continues to expand its network with a vision of improving lives through fiber technology. www.point-broadband.com

About Connect Humanity

Connect Humanity is a non-profit impact fund advancing digital equity by investing in community connectivity providers. It helps underserved communities identify the right solutions to meet their connectivity needs and provides funding and technical assistance so they can build the internet infrastructure, tools, and skills they need to participate fully in a digital society. www.connecthumanity.fund

About Rural LISC

Launched in 1995, Rural LISC is the rural component of LISC (Local Initiative Support Corporation), the largest community development support organization in the country. Through a partnership base of over 145 organizations spread across 49 states and Puerto Rico, Rural LISC provides a wide range of services, including financial support, training, technical assistance and capital resources to help rural community partners and developers invest in rural communities. www.lisc.org/rural

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