

Photos



Howard Lowe, director of the Technical Assistance Center at Plattsburgh State

P-R File Photo /

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Spitzer pushes high-speed Internet statewide

and DAN HEATH
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ALBANY -- Gov. Eliot Spitzer on Thursday announced his plan to provide broadband Internet service to even the most remote areas of the state.

Affordable high-speed Internet service plan was part of what Spitzer said will be a transformation and expansion of New York's economy.

"It is as critical to the next century economy as the Erie Canal was the last," Spitzer said. "It is how information flows and we are living in an economy where information is the commodity that matters and it is necessary that everyone is wired."

He said the effort will take several years and evolve into an effort to provide wireless service statewide.

"We're behind internationally, that's what troubles me most," Spitzer said. "When the average kid in South Korea has better access to broadband than the average kid in New York state, something is wrong."

The effort comes after legislative proposals have languished.

"We welcome the governor's involvement," said Assemblyman Richard Brodsky, a Westchester Democrat who has sought accessible broadband service for years.

"The key here is affordability in low-income neighborhoods that are already wired," Brodsky said. "The Assembly has a plan to do that, to deal with that problem. We'd love to sit down and negotiate with the governor, but I don't see anything in the governor's proposal about a legislative role."

"As we build an innovation economy we must make New York the most connected and technologically advanced place to live and do business in the world," Spitzer said. "Internet access is no longer a luxury."

A state Council for Universal Broadband will distribute \$5 million in grants to research, design and provide broadband Internet that Spitzer said will lead to jobs and economic development. The plan is aimed at providing a tool to help the long stagnant economy in upstate counties.

The initiative includes a plan to help show New Yorkers learn how to get the most out of broadband service including job searches, school and college

work, and establishing home businesses. More than 350 state government services and transactions are available on the Internet.

The broadband council includes top information technology officials in state government as well as representatives from local governments and experts from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy and Alain Kaloyeros, a nonotechnology expert from the state University at Albany.

Local representative

Howard Lowe, director of the Technical Assistance Center at Plattsburgh State, is a member of the new council.

"I look forward to hear when the first meetings will be scheduled," he said Thursday. "I'm anxious to get to work with the council."

The Technical Assistance Center and the Research Foundation of SUNY are coordinating construction of CBN Connect, a nearly 500-mile fiber-optic and wireless network that would serve Clinton, Essex and Franklin counties. A needs analysis and conceptual design was unveiled in October.

The next step is to produce a technical design, expected to be finished next year. Construction could start soon after that.