



Arctic Slope Telephone Association Cooperative, Inc.
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ASTAC awarded funding for Rural Broadband Project on the North Slope
\$3 million grant will help connect Atqasuk to high-speed fiber-optic network

Anchorage, Alaska – Arctic Slope Telephone Association Cooperative, Inc. (ASTAC) has been awarded \$3 million in funding for a transformational \$6.5 million broadband project in rural Alaska. The grant will provide ASTAC with the means to expand its capacity to provide customers in Atqasuk with access to high-speed broadband.

Funding is being provided through United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Rural Utilities Service (RUS) Community Connect Grant Program which will be used to build a fiber optic extension and fiber to every home and business in the village of Atqasuk. The village has traditionally been served by satellite bandwidth, which is prohibitively expensive, and has limited capacity and very high latency.

“We are thrilled the USDA has awarded ASTAC the funding to make a broadband transformation in Atqasuk,” said ASTAC General Manager/CEO Jens Laipeniaks. “At the direction of our Board of Directors, our goal is to connect all nine ASTAC markets to high-quality, terrestrially-served broadband. Upon completion, Atqasuk will follow Utqiagvik, Point Hope, Wainwright, Nuiqsut, and Deadhorse as fully fiber-connected communities. This grant will be instrumental in achieving that goal and further closes the digital opportunity gap between remote and urban Alaska.”

ASTAC will construct and operate a broadband system that makes service of at least 25 megabits per second (Mbps) available to residential and business customers within the proposed service area. As part of the project, ASTAC will provide free 25 Mbps broadband service to critical community facilities for two years, and computers in the Atqasuk community center where residents can access broadband service free of charge.

The permitting process to build the overland fiber optic cable began in August 2017. The nearly 70 miles of fiber will connect Atqasuk to Utqiagvik, where ASTAC has a base operation providing telecommunications services for the western communities of the North Slope. In March 2018, ASTAC’s



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Chief of Operations Brian DeMarco, assisted by local guide Nimrod David Bodfish, traveled the proposed route by snow machine from Atqasuk to Utqiagvik. The two-day round-trip survey allowed for data collection to verify topography considerations that were captured in the final plan of operations for the project.

It took more than a village to make this award a reality. ASTAC would like to thank the community of Atqasuk, Village of Atqasuk, Atqasuk Mayor Doug Whiteman, all agencies who wrote letters of support, Bureau of Land Management, United States Core of Engineers, United States Fish & Wildlife, UIC, ICAS, NSB, ASRC and finally the USDA Rural Development Agency and RUS. Everyone's contributions including knowledge of the area, cultural insight, and environmental guidance made the two years of planning a success.

ASTAC anticipates construction in the winter of 2020-21, with a projected in-service date of mid-2021.

ASTAC provides Broadband Ethernet and Internet, 4G wireless as well as local and long-distance services across the North Slope. Additionally, ASTAC offers a Nomadic WAN and Internet service using the North Slope's only private LTE network covering the oil fields. For more information, visit www.astac.net.

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