

MESSENGER

Winter 2021

SCALABLE INFRASTRUCTURE

By Jens Laipenieks, CEO/General Manager



Today, November 15, 2021, President Biden signed the long-anticipated Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act into law. It passed like any other day, but the ramifications of this day will last for generations. The new law allocates \$65 Billion in funding to expanding Broadband service to ensure “every American has access to reliable high-speed Internet.” Here at ASTAC, we share the very same vision.

The FCC currently defines Broadband as an Internet connection with speeds of at least 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload. A milestone speed that ASTAC was proud to achieve early this year with the launch of our Home Internet+ plans. The new infrastructure bill raises the bar to 100 Mbps download and 20 Mbps upload to homes, and 1 Gbps to anchor institutions like schools, libraries, and hospitals.

More importantly, the law recognizes that future bandwidth needs will be far greater than today. The Act’s language prioritizes projects that construct scalable networks, which means fiber-optic cables, which are the only transport medium capable of delivering enough capacity to fuel the network demands of the next generation. Scalability means ASTAC fiber optic networks are capable of delivering speeds well above the new 100 Mbps benchmark, Gigabits per second, and more. Scalability was the basis behind our decision to invest in our fiber networks, which began in 2015 in Point Hope, and today reach almost 89% of our members. Upon completion of our Atqasuk and Kaktovik projects, that number will be 94%.

Quality Broadband service requires three key elements; the “last mile”, the “middle mile” and finally the “content”. ASTAC has arguably the best “last mile” fiber-optic networks in the State. The “middle mile” is the connection from our markets back to an interconnection point to “content” providers. We have multiple options for affordable “content”,

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or connections to the Internet, both in-state, and in Seattle and Portland. Like many things in remote Alaska, some things cost more, but we continue to work with our "middle mile" providers to improve our costs, which directly equate to the speeds and pricing of our products.

The Covid-19 pandemic has shown us that Broadband is an essential service, and the new Infrastructure law codifies that. Details of how funds will be allocated to States are beginning to emerge, but the final Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) with all the details of the Act will be issued in the May 2022 timeframe. The State of Alaska has taken recent steps to establish a new State Broadband Office, which will administer Alaska's grant program. ASTAC will be closely monitoring these programs with the intent to continue our goal of connecting all North Slope communities to fiber-optic networks.

CAPITAL CREDITS REMINDER

ASTAC's Board of Directors approved a return of \$1 million to eligible current and former members, through a general retirement of patronage capital. This includes the balance of those funds assigned for the years 1993 and 1994, as well as a portion of the funds assigned in 1995. This action will provide funds to individuals and businesses who were members of the Cooperative and received telecommunications service from ASTAC at any time during 1993, 1994 or 1995.

Members should contact the Cooperative to ensure their address on file is up to date. We recommend members review the Unclaimed Patronage Amounts information on our website at [ASTAC.NET/company/member-info/capital-credits/](https://www.astac.net/company/member-info/capital-credits/).



ASTAC'S WIRELESS NETWORK IS GETTING AN UPGRADE

All communities in ASTAC's service area will soon benefit from a wireless network upgrade. Advantages of the migration will include visual voicemail, iMessage and facetime with cellular number and cellular network, and higher data speeds.

To provide all of our wireless subscribers with this improved experience, some members will need to trade in or upgrade their devices, and all members (regardless of device type) will receive new SIM cards. Our Customer Service Team has been reaching out to the small number of users who will need to upgrade their device to remain compatible on the new network. Our team is actively working on trading out and upgrading devices for those with incompatible phones. We encourage all members to visit our website and check your device's compatibility.

More information will be shared regarding the new SIM cards on our website, where all the latest migration updates can be found.

ASTAC plans to complete the full migration and device trades/ upgrades by April 2022. If you have any questions about this migration or your device's compatibility, please check our website or call our customer care team at 1-800-478-6409.

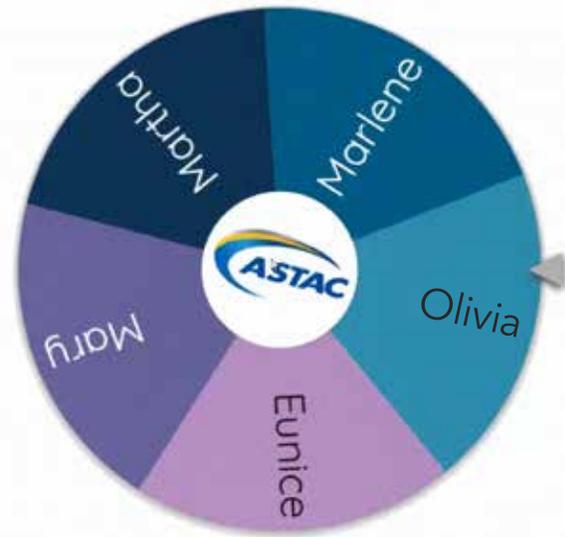
We are proud to bring you a better wireless experience!

ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL YEAR OF VIRTUAL MEETINGS

During the week of November 1-5, ASTAC’s team and board were able to convene online for annual meetings in each community. Quorum was met in each meeting, with online voting and mail-in ballots. Both of the proposed bylaw amendments were voted in favor of passing and the amendments were updated upon completion of meetings. Our team answered all of the questions posed and appreciated the opportunity to report on the 2020 successes. Jens’ shared that, “the team misses in-person meetings, but we are doing all that we can to ensure the safety of our members and team through the pandemic. We hope to return to in-person opportunities very soon.”

Everyone at ASTAC would like to thank Marlene Bolt for her service to the company and its members. We would also like to welcome Olivia Cabinboy to the board and look forward to her term over the next three years. All other communities incumbents were re-elected to the board and they are thrilled to continue their service with their respective communities. Across the board we look forward to many developments on the horizon and another successful meeting next year. Thank you to all those who voted and participated in the elections and meetings, we appreciate everyone for being active with the Cooperative.

The annual meeting presentation and list of prize winners can be viewed on our website at astac.net/annualmeetings.



ANNUAL MEETING PRIZE WINNERS

2021 PRIZES	POINT HOPE	POINT LAY	ATOASUK	WAIN-WRIGHT	NUIQSUT	UTQIAGVIK	KAKTOVIK	PRUDHOE BAY	ANAKTUVUK PASS
\$100 ASTAC Account Credit Certificate	John Long Jr.	Marie Tracey	Sammy Panik	Randy Nashoalook	Mary Cabinboy	Julia Ninggeok	Marie Kavelook	VISA - Easter Valu Filihia	Homer Mekiana
\$400 Gas Vouchers*	Jesse Frankson	Bill Tracey	Freddy Hopson	Eveylyn Nashoalook	Olivia Cabinboy	Julia Ninggeok	Marie Kavelook		Pearl Burris
Samsung Galaxy Tab A7 (value \$310)	John Long Jr	Marie Tracey	Sammy Panik	Kathy Bodfish	Eunice Brower	Alberta Kanayurak	Noreen Kaleak	Trish Brower	Inge-Lise Jensen
\$200 ASTAC Account Credit Certificate	Jack Schaefer	Sophie Tracey	Melvin Wong	Edna Ahmaogak	Marlene Bolt	Frieda Kaleak	Tommy Tagarook	VISA - Easter Valu Filihiar	Homer Mekiana
Crow Creek Design cutting board (value \$110)	Lillian Lane	Bill Tracey Jr.	Della Segevan	Sonya Nashoalook	Mary Cabinboy	Carol Edwardsen	Carla SimsKayotuk		Lawrence Burris
\$100 Visa Gift Card	Jimmie Frandson Jr.	Gertrude Frankson	Rod & Patti Lloyd	Mcridge Nayakik	Martha Pausanna	Cynthia Spear			

OPEN POSITIONS

ASTAC is seeking to fill positions in various locations. If you are interested in any of the following openings, please visit ASTAC.net/careers for more information on how to apply. We hope you will join our team!

CURRENT OPENINGS

Combination Technician – *Deadhorse*

Controller – *Anchorage*

Part-Time Community Liaison – *Utqiagvik*

Part-Time Customer Experience Specialist – *Utqiagvik*

Village Representative – *Atkasuk*

Village Representative (Alternate) – *Anaktuvuk Pass, Kaktovik, Nuiqsut*



APPLY TODAY

Opportunities at new heights

astac.net/careers

EBB EMERGENCY BROADBAND BENEFIT

ASTAC is an approved participant in the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program (EBB). The EBB Program is a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) program that provides a temporary discount on monthly Broadband bills for qualifying low-income households.

If you reside in ASTAC's service area, you could be eligible to receive:

Up to a \$75/month discount on your Internet service

A one-time discount of up to \$100 to purchase a tablet

The benefit is limited to one monthly service discount per household. To check your eligibility and fill out an application, please visit astac.net/emergency-broadband-benefit/.

EMERGENCY BROADBAND BENEFIT
Helping Households Connect During the Pandemic

The Emergency Broadband Benefit is an FCC program to help households struggling to pay for internet service during the pandemic. This new benefit will connect eligible households to jobs, critical healthcare services, and virtual classrooms.

Learn how you may qualify at www.astac.net.

SHIPS ON US!

Did you know ASTAC offers free shipping ALL YEAR long? Call our Customer Experience Department at 1-800-478-6409 to place an order today!

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