

South Central Power Company brings the promise of broadband to rural Ohio



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Rural areas around Rocky Fork Lake (pictured) in southern Ohio will be among the first to receive high-speed internet from connectSCP's new fiber internet service

South Central Power Company Profile

With 260 employees and a large geographic footprint stretching across the state of Ohio, South Central Power Company serves more than 125,000 residential, commercial, and industrial customers in 24 Ohio counties. Founded in 1936 to bring electric power to the community, they maintain more than 12,000 miles of energized power lines.

Project Overview

After nearly 90 years of bringing electric power to rural Ohio, South Central secured grant funding from BroadbandOhio, a division of the Ohio Department of Development, and launched connectSCP to deliver broadband access to the state's unserved and underserved. \$30 million in grants will be used to bring broadband to 7,870 households in parts of Adams, Brown, Clermont, Fayette, Highland, Ross, Pike and Scioto counties. While \$68 million will fund projects in Belmont, Carroll, Harrison, Jefferson, Monroe and Noble counties in the eastern part of the state to connect 5,745 households.

South Central is building a state-of-art XGS-PON network that will deliver all the bandwidth their subscribers need today and it's 25 Gig-capable providing a seamless migration path to address future needs. In addition to the broadband service the new fiber they're deploying can be leveraged to support substation communications enhancing their existing utility operations.



connectSCP

 By South Central Power

Business driver of the broadband investment

The driver behind South Central's broadband investment comes down to one of the seven cooperative principles - concern for and service to the community. South Central believes that broadband access is a utility-level service. Today the ability to work from home, school from home, and access state-of-the-art healthcare services is not nice to have, it's a must have. Multiple factors including terrain and remoteness made the two areas of the state where South Central is installing broadband, high-cost areas for this type of deployment. These areas were at risk for being

left behind by the digital transformation. And for the leadership team at South Central that simply wasn't acceptable.

"Our goal is that every member of the cooperative has access to high-speed internet, whether it's from connectSCP or another provider. We want to be part of the solution to closing the digital divide in the rural communities we serve with power," Rick Lemonds, South Central's president and CEO, said in a statement.

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Rick Lemonds
President and CEO, South Central

Challenges and Surprises

The biggest challenge in bringing broadband to such high-cost areas is making the numbers work. While the grants awarded by BroadbandOhio were critical and helped manage the construction costs of the network, there are still significant operational costs to consider. The same challenging terrain and population density that increases the cost of deployment also increases the cost of maintaining the network - so operational excellence and partnering with trusted vendors was key to the financial viability of the project and the long-term sustainability of the network.



Fiber reels waiting in South Central Power's Hillsboro warehouse are ready for the next phase of construction for South Central Power's southwestern Ohio rural broadband network.

Business Case

Understanding not only construction costs and Day 1 operational expenses, but how those ongoing expenses may change over time was key to South Central's business case.



Local officials and community leaders from southwestern Ohio gathered with representatives from South Central Power Company, Nokia and other project partners to cut the ribbon on the cooperative's first fiber deployment zone in March, 2024

South Central wanted to ensure that there were no hidden fees that would surprise them a few years down the road. The cooperative selected a complete end-to-end solution from Nokia including IP routing, fiber access and in-home solutions. Working closely with Nokia, South Central got clear visibility to 3 and 5 year life cycle costs – there'll be no surprises. And the smooth integration of the cooperative's chosen OSS/BSS solution (from NISC) with the Nokia gear really made it a homerun.

As this deployment will mark the first time many of these residents will experience high-speed internet at home, most will be unfamiliar with routers, in-home networking, mesh networks, etc. so a turnkey approach was critical. Nokia's Corteca solution allowed connectSCP to deliver more than just an internet connection that terminates at the wall outside the home. With Corteca they're providing whole home Wi-Fi and a world class user experience. Corteca Home Controller gives connectSCP advanced Wi-Fi management with real-time, network-wide control. This ability to proactively optimize and remotely troubleshoot the network reduces costly truck rolls by up to 80%.

Conclusion

South Central Power Company believes that the people of rural Ohio deserve access to the same opportunities that people living in major metropolitan areas enjoy.

They are tapping into their heritage of bringing life-changing services to rural Ohio. They want to enable the communities they serve to grow and thrive and stay connected with loved ones. This is our generation's electrification moment and with so much of rural America still unserved we all have a role to play.

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About Nokia

Nokia delivers secure, reliable and sustainable network solutions to service providers of all kinds. Our extensive portfolio of fiber, cable, and wireless solutions and services allows us to bring ultra-broadband services to more people, more quickly, and at the right cost.

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