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Office of Broadband Access & Expansion

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# State celebrates launch of rural student broadband connections

*Ribbon cutting ceremony marks milestone for Silver City schools*

SILVER CITY, N.M. — A total of 484 student households in Grant County are receiving high-speed internet, thanks to a New Mexico Student Connect grant program designed to provide broadband access to rural students across New Mexico.

Today, the Office of Broadband Access and Expansion (OBAE) joined TWN Communications, state leaders, and local officials at Silver High School to celebrate the launch of a $1.5 million Student Connect grant project connecting rural students and school staff in Silver City.

“This project represents more than just faster internet—it’s about equity, access, and opportunity,” said **William Hawkins**, Silver Consolidated Schools superintendent. “For many of our students, especially in rural areas, reliable broadband is the missing link to fully participating in 21st-century learning. With this support, Silver Schools can better connect classrooms to homes, extend learning time, and remove barriers that too often hold students back.”

“This is a life changer for students and staff in the district who have lacked reliable and sustainable high-speed internet at home,” said **Neala Krueger**, OBAE senior program manager. “Now they’ll have broadband access to do homework, research, apply to colleges online and have access to other vital services.”

TWN is using the state funding to upgrade five towers, build fixed wireless service, and provide equipment for designated student homes. TWN will connect unserved and underserved rural students.

Participating students and staff will also receive up to three years of complimentary broadband, enabling students to connect to educational resources at home and closing the digital divide.

“Upgrading TWN's network in and around Silver City is more than a technical enhancement—it’s an investment in the community," said **Justin Donaldson**, TWN Communications, COO. "From students and families to local businesses, we’re committed to delivering fast, reliable internet that supports growth, opportunity, and everyday life.”

Today’s ceremony included remarks from Lt. Gov. Howie Morales; Rep. Luis Terrazas; Jeff Lopez, OBAE director; Justin Donaldson, TWN Communications COO; William Hawkins, Silver Consolidated Schools superintendent; Eric Rodgers, OBAE senior project manager.

Money for the project comes from the $25 million Student Connect program which is part of the Connect New Mexico Fund. Student Connect funding addresses critical disadvantages faced by rural students who lack home internet access.

OBAE has approved 12 Student Connect grants, totaling $23 million. All Student Connect projects must be completed by June 30, 2026.

The Connect New Mexico Fund was established by the Legislature in 2021 through the Connect New Mexico Act and transferred to OBAE in 2023.

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*The Office of Broadband Access and Expansion is dedicated to serving New Mexico with a commitment to make high-speed broadband accessible to all New Mexicans. OBAE’s mission is to expand and improve high-speed internet service with passionate leadership that drives bold, equitable, affordable and inclusive broadband solutions. OBAE seeks results that honor the state’s rich heritage and elevate quality of life for all.*

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