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Office of Broadband Access & Expansion

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## Free internet available for nearly 900 rural student households

*Broadband infrastructure projects in two counties now complete*

ALBUQUERQUE – Nearly 900 student households in Grant and Hidalgo counties finally have access to broadband following the completion of two state-funded broadband projects designed to address critical disadvantages faced by rural students who lack internet access.

The Office of Broadband Access and Expansion (OBAE) announced today that Transworld Network LLC (TWN Communications) has completed Student Connect broadband infrastructure projects in Silver City and Lordsburg. The provider has finished building seven fixed wireless towers and receivers that will connect students in those school districts to high-speed internet. The program includes three years of free internet.

The expanded internet service covers more than 500 square miles in the two counties.

“This is a tremendous milestone in our effort to provide broadband to students who can’t access the internet at home once they return from school,” said **OBAE Director Jeff Lopez**. “They will now be able to do homework, use email and have access to all the digital tools to help them succeed in school and in life. We want households to sign up for service right away.”

In Grant County, broadband is now available for 484 rural student households in the Silver Consolidated Schools District, and 395 rural student households in Lordsburg Municipal Schools District in Hidalgo County.

“This project represents more than just faster internet—it’s about equity, access, and opportunity,” said **Silver Consolidated Schools Superintendent Will Hawkins**. “Hundreds of Silver Schools families now have access to reliable high-speed internet at home, removing a barrier that many have struggled with for years in rural New Mexico. This means the ability to complete assignments, access educational resources, communicate with teachers, and take advantage of opportunities that shouldn’t depend on where they happen to live.”

“The completion of the Student Connect project is an important step for our students and families,” said **Lordsburg Municipal Schools Superintendent Dr. Steve Lucas**. “Reliable, high-speed internet gives our students better access to the online resources, research, and learning opportunities they need, both at school and at home. We appreciate the work of TWN Communications and the state broadband office in making this possible for our community.”

TWN continues to work with the school districts to ensure the program is successful. Dozens of student households have already begun to sign up for the internet service, and OBAE encourages qualified residents to enroll in the Student Connect program.

Eligible Silver City and Lordsburg households can sign up for the broadband service at the TWN website.

“Silver City and Lordsburg are more than communities we serve — they’re communities we live in and are proud to support,” said **TWN Communications Chief Operating Officer Justin Donaldson**. “By helping students in Silver Consolidated Schools and Lordsburg Municipal Schools stay connected, we’re investing in education, families and the future of these communities.”

**Lopez** says this Student Connect accomplishment reaffirms the state’s commitment to provide broadband to all New Mexicans, especially in rural and Tribal communities.

OBAE awarded TWN Communications two $1.5 million grants to provide the fixed wireless service in the school districts. The internet provider is connecting both unserved and underserved rural student households.

Unserved locations have no broadband connectivity, or where maximum available download speeds are below 25 Mbps and upload speeds are below 3 Mbps. Underserved still lack access to reliable wired or fixed-wireless speeds of at least 100 Mbps download and 20 Mbps upload.

Student Connect funding comes from OBAE’s Connect New Mexico Fund -- a $25 million appropriation for public school projects.

OBAE has awarded 13 school districts Student Connect grants, totaling $24.9 million.

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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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