FTTH Customer FAQ

Southern Rivers Energy electric membership cooperative is excited to announce our plans to better serve our membership by introducing world-class fiber broadband Internet.

Our electric cooperative will be building a fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) network – the gold standard of communications transmission – over the existing electric distribution infrastructure that will take fiber directly into your homes and businesses and deliver reliable, high-speed internet services.

The project is a partnership between Southern Rivers Energy and Conexon.

The Fiber-to-the-Home Project

What is the scope of the FTTH buildout?

This FTTH buildout, encompassing 2150 miles of fiber, will ultimately reach 100% of SRE's nearly 16,000 members across nine counties providing access to high-speed broadband Internet upon project completion.

Who is building the network?

Southern Rivers Energy is partnering with rural fiber broadband design and construction management leader, Conexon for this ambitious project. Under the partnership, design and construction of the FTTH network will be led by Conexon. Upon completion, the network will be managed and operated by its newly formed internet services provider (ISP) arm, Connect.

Connect was formed to operate and manage cooperative and investor-owned fiber-to-the-home networks. Connect leverages Conexon's decades of co-op operations, fiber-optic design and construction, telecommunications, federal and state lobbying and customer experience management expertise to successfully launch and operate projects. The Connect approach is to work exclusively with electric cooperatives such as SRE to launch and deploy high-speed fiber-optic networks, enabling them to offer world-class fiber broadband to 100% of co-op members.

When will construction of the network begin?

We are proud to report that make-ready construction – the process of preparing our electric infrastructure to accommodate the fiber-optic cable – and the actual fiber construction are underway in two of our substations, with fiber huts recently installed in July 2021. These are

major initial milestones in construction of the fiber network. Fiber huts house all the equipment that actually lights the fiber so it can deliver internet service to homes and businesses. The first fiber hut was installed at our Tobesofkee substation on Hwy 41 South, which serves a large portion of our territory in eastern Monroe County. The second hut was set at our Barnesville substation on Hwy 341 next to the Ace Hardware shopping center, which serves parts of Lamar and Monroe counties. The next fiber hut will be installed at our Culloden substation (serving southern Monroe County) and while a date has not been set, we are in the preliminary stages of site preparation.

Make-ready engineering is well underway for our first phase, with overhead make-ready construction starting in early August. Initial underground fiber construction and overhead fiber construction also began in mid-August. The first circuit to be constructed will come out of the Tobesofkee hut.

More specific timelines will be announced as the project evolves but we expect to be conducting our final network and process testing in early fall with the first customers to be connected in late fall. Customers in and around the area between Bottoms and City Pond Roads, Crawford and Brooks Roads will be connected first, with the areas surrounding Johnstonville Road to follow. Sometimes weather or other factors may affect our plans, but we will continue to communicate with SRE members about any changes to the schedule. Upon completion of the communities served by our Tobesofkee substations, the project will continue in areas served by our Barnesville substations. Be sure to watch for updates at facebook.com/connectsouthernrivers and preregister at conexonconnect.com/southernriversenergy.

Where will the internet service be offered?

The buildout will be completed in phases, and eventually, it will reach every SRE member in 9 counties, including some non-members if they live inside a census block that is being served by Conexon Connect. SRE's service area includes parts of Bibb, Coweta, Crawford, Lamar, Meriwether, Monroe, Pike, Spalding and Upson.

Will my electric bill increase to pay for the FTTH network?

No. Electric rates will not be raised to subsidize the buildout or deployment. Together Southern Rivers Energy and Conexon are investing a total of $59.5 million to build the network, which will enable improved electric service and increased reliability through smart grid capabilities in addition to delivering world-class internet access. A combination of low-interest loans, federal, state and local funds will contribute to the construction funding.

The Technology – Internet Service

What is a fiber-optic network?

Fiber-optic systems are made up of tiny strands of glass that carry data using light waves, resulting in much faster internet speeds and better reliability than traditional copper lines. Most internet providers use fiber in their systems but use copper lines for the final connections to the home, resulting in slower speeds. Southern Rivers Energy, Conexon, and fellow cooperatives believe 100% FTTH is the best, most sustainable communications choice. With our FTTH service, we offer "symmetrical" speeds, meaning you'll enjoy the same high speeds whether uploading or downloading.

What makes fiber so special?

A fiber-optic network sends and receives data at the speed of light. In addition to super-fast transmission speeds, a fiber-optic network can carry an extremely high amount of data. Fiber is also more reliable than other networks, because it's less susceptible to interference and damage from lightning and other acts of nature.

What does the term "broadband" mean?

Broadband commonly refers to high-speed internet access that is always on and faster than traditional dial-up access. Broadband fiber-optic networks can deliver voice, data, video and email services over the internet. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) defines the minimum broadband speed as 25 Megabits per second (mbps) download and 3 Megabits per second (mbps) upload.

The Next Steps – Getting Service

How will I get FTTH services through the co-op?

Southern Rivers Energy will own the fiber network and use some of the fiber strands to strengthen the electric distribution and take advantage of smart grid technology to enhance electric service and improve reliability. SRE will lease the excess fiber to Connect and Connect agrees to provide fiber-to-the-home broadband service to 100 percent of SRE's members. Connect will connect internet service inside SRE members' homes and provide the billing and customer service.

What internet packages will be available?

Connect, powered by Southern Rivers Energy will offer a package with a minimum of 100 megabits (Mbps) per second upload and download speeds (symmetrical service) for

$49.95/month as well as 1,000 Mbps (1 gigabit) per second upload and download speeds for $79.95/month along with managed Wi-Fi services for an additional $4.95/month. Connect recently added a 2 Gigabit symmetrical package for $99.95/month.

Are there data caps with this service?

NO. There will be no data caps or bandwidth throttling (intentional slowing or speeding of internet service) with this service.

How long will it take before we have access to the service? What is involved in the process of building a fiber-to-the-home network?

Construction of a fiber network is a complex process involving numerous contractors and dependent on a number of variables that include length of the circuit, terrain and soils, weather, and other external factors. Most distribution lines are a mix of overhead and underground construction. SRE's territory was divided into two phases of construction based on substation locations and access to the main fiber huts that actually light the fiber and provide internet service. The estimated completion time for the project is about three years from the start of fiber construction.

The Benefits

Why are you offering broadband service?

Our communities have long suffered from a lack of broadband equality – access to the same speeds and capabilities as those in less rural areas. Broadband availability across our service area will help close the digital divide between those who have access to advanced technology and those who don't. A few of the many advantages of broadband access are:

- Online teaching capabilities allowing our students to learn from home
- Healthcare benefits such as telemedicine
- Work-from-home interoffice connectivity and videoconferencing capabilities that will help professionals stay in their homes while being optimally productive
- Quality of life improvements through enhanced communications
- Economic development and growth in rural areas. Access to high-speed internet can raise home prices and attract businesses to communities.

In addition, by connecting SRE's electric substations and offices with fiber, we will create a smart grid with more automation capabilities to better serve our members. Smart grid capabilities – the standard for optimum electric infrastructure – allows our devices to communicate with each other and delivers benefits such as improved power outage response times, better load balancing, more efficient electricity delivery and others.

How will I benefit from fiber internet access?

Our sole reason for offering high-speed internet services is to meet the needs of members like you. You will no longer have to rely on DSL, fixed wireless or satellite internet to stay connected online. You will be able to stream high-definition media smoothly and quickly, have the data capacity to download and upload data such as files, photos and videos at super-fast speeds, and have access to the latest technological advancements and applications. Our FTTH world-class service will be reliable, affordable and backed by your local, trusted co-op.

You will be able to run multiple devices – such as cell phones, computers and laptops – simultaneously in your home or business without decreased download and upload speeds. The table below gives you a speed comparison between what you may have now and what's possible with FTTH.

*	**Typical dsl/wireless/satellite (3Mbps)**	**Standard internet speed (25 Mbps)**	**High-Speed internet (100 Mbps)**	**High-speed internet (200 Mbps)**	**Ultrafast INTERNET Up to 1000 Mbps (Gigabit)**
Download 100 photos	14.7 minutes	1.8 minutes	26.4 seconds	13.2 seconds	2.8 *seconds*
Download HD movie	4.8 hours	34.4 minutes	8.6 minutes	4.3 minutes	54.3 *seconds*
Download 50 Songs	8.2 minutes	1 minute	14.7 seconds	7.3 seconds	1.5 *seconds*
Download 50GB Game	39.8 hours	4.8 hours	1.2 hours	35.8 minutes	7.5 *minutes*

** Download speeds calculated using the following averages:*
Phone Photo – 3.15 MB
HD movie – 6 GB
Song – 3.5 MB
Game – 50 GB