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Frontier To Bring High-Speed Internet To Hartford's North End



Frontier Communications Connecticut headquarters building at 310 Orange Street in New Haven. ä (Dan Haar / hc)

By **Stephen Singer · Contact Reporter**

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HARTFORD — Frontier Communications Corp. announced Friday a four-stage project to bring high-speed internet to Hartford's North End where residents and business owners have long complained that broadband access is spotty or non-existent.

The telecommunications company said it will install a fiber network known as Gigabyte Passive Optical Network. The technology allows a telecommunicatins provider to install a point-to-multipoint system in which a single optical fiber may serve numerous customers.

The technology, which Frontier provides to homes in New Haven, North Haven, Stamford and West Hartford, will be available for the first time to businesses in Connecticut in Hartford's North End.

"The reality of the situation is that people cannot get enough of high-speed," said Paul Quick senior vice

president of Frontier and general manager for Connecticut.

High-speed internet is necessary not only for businesses to market their products or services and accept payments, but also for residential use. It's critical for students' homework assignments, TV streaming and, in certain cases, the functions of running a house such as lighting, security and regulating the thermostat.

Quick did not detail the cost of the North End project.

State Consumer Counsel Elin Swanson Katz has criticized telecommunications companies for failing to provide broadband to Hartford neighborhoods and also in rural northwest Connecticut. She commissioned a report earlier this year that details slow or non-existent internet service in parts of Hartford and in affluent Litchfield County.

A Frontier spokeswoman said the pricing for broadband in Hartford's North End will be "very competitive."

The report said telecommunications providers in certain areas in Hartford fail to connect customers to broadband or do so at a "prohibitively high cost" of \$10,000 to \$30,000 with costly monthly service.

Telecommunications companies have pushed back, accusing Katz of selecting a few areas where internet service is incomplete while ignoring service across the state.

Frontier, which took over the AT&T franchise in Connecticut in 2014, surveyed 101 businesses and residents in the North End and heard directly about their demands for high-speed internet, said Debra Zampano, area general manager for Frontier's Hartford region.

Quick said Frontier did not act in response to Katz.

"We didn't just do this by happenstance," he said. "We heard the criticism, but really, Debra came in and took a cold, objective look and saw there are opportunities here."

Fiber will be buried underground and strung overhead in an area that roughly includes Main, Windsor and Kensington streets.

The project will be completed through 2016 in four phases, starting with connections to small businesses followed by residential customers.

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