



Chris Silveira, PEAK Internet lead lineman, connecting with the community at the 2022 Strawberry Festival Grand Parade in Lebanon. PHOTOS BY BRIAN FAGAN

# Connecting Rural Communities

PEAK Internet's investment in fiber internet expands rural growth opportunities

Oregon is an amazing place to live. We are blessed with beautiful natural surroundings like forests, lakes and mountains. On the flip side, it can be challenging to get access to the same services enjoyed by people living in more urban areas.

During the pandemic, few services became more important than a fast, reliable internet connection. In 2021, approximately 38 million people worked remotely. This is expected to be the norm for 15% of American workers. That's roughly triple the pre-pandemic rate.

Historically in many parts of Oregon,

only a few organizations have invested in building fiber-optic networks—the best infrastructure for providing telecommunications services. One of those is PEAK Internet. With offices in Corvallis and Lebanon, Oregon, it serves more than 20 communities across the state.

PEAK Internet is a local company that has been providing connectivity to homes, businesses, schools, libraries, universities, hospitals and veterans homes for decades. In 2012, the company started investing in a fiber-optic network infrastructure that now spans more than 100 miles in Linn and Benton counties.

“Fiber is the best technology for delivering telecommunications services, which is why we continue to invest in building future-proof networks,” says Rick Petersen, president and CEO of PEAK Internet. “But just as important for a local company that's dedicated to our communities is providing great customer experience. We do that with a team of local technical experts who are available on a 24/7 basis.”

PEAK Internet is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Consumers Power Inc., your member-owned electric cooperative serving more than 23,000 members in

parts of six Oregon counties.

“Fiber is a really important part of service to our members but also for the operation of the electric utility,” says Roman Gillen, president and CEO of Consumers Power.

Working from home isn't the only growing trend. Without organizations like PEAK investing in fiber-optic connections to homes in rural parts of the state, it would be extremely difficult—if not impossible—for children to learn from home. A slow, unreliable connection also presents challenges for accessing remote medical and mental health services, banking, or entertainment.

“We're proud to be working to eliminate the digital divide that exists in certain parts of Oregon,” says Matt Webb, PEAK's manager of sales and business development. “We know that a reliable internet connection results in

huge economic and social benefits for the communities that we serve. Small businesses can stay open thanks to online sales. Residents who used to travel for meetings can now join them from home. High school and college students can join virtual classes while their parents are working from home.”

This summer, PEAK was selected to provide internet connectivity to broadcasters at the World Athletics Championships held at Hayward Field in Eugene. This once-in-a-lifetime event brought together the world's best track and field athletes from more than 200 nations in a celebration of diversity, human potential and achievement. The event was the most watched World Athletics Championships in U.S. television history, reaching more than 13.7 million viewers. An additional 69 countries had their own national feed, and eight

international feeds were all made possible by an enterprise-grade wireless feed by PEAK Internet.

In its ongoing effort to provide Oregon with the best connectivity possible, PEAK recently launched new, ultra-fast internet packages in Corvallis, Lebanon, and Albany, offering speeds up to 5 gigabits per second. That is 200 times faster than the FCC's definition of broadband—25 megabits per second—which is what many of the area's existing providers offer.

And this is just the beginning. PEAK Internet is committed to ensuring all residents of its service area have access to a fast, reliable internet connection powered by fiber. PEAK fiber transforms rural Oregon into a desirable place to live, allowing people to enjoy the beautiful natural surroundings and the conveniences often associated with living in urban communities. ■



## Broadband Internet Funding

In 2020, the Oregon State Legislature and Gov. Kate Brown allocated \$10 million from the CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Fund to Business Oregon's Rural Broadband Capacity Program for broadband projects targeting unserved and underserved areas of the state.

Grants provided funding for 28 projects across 24 counties that delivered faster broadband for telework, telehealth and K-12 distance learning applications in unserved and underserved areas in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency. Recipients included Oregon cities, counties, tribes, cooperatives, school districts, and private sector internet service providers.

Scan the QR code to see how PEAK Internet, the second largest recipient at \$1,222,757, invested in bringing high-speed fiber internet to residents in East Linn County.

