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Grant to help fund new Internet service

Broadband-over-power-line access being developed for parts of Onondaga County.

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A Syracuse company will get \$1.3 million from the state to develop a new type of Internet service for Onondaga County's western suburbs.

New Visions Powerline Communications Inc., based in Armory Square, learned Wednesday it will receive a state grant to develop its broadband-over-power-line Internet service in Westvale, Fairmount, Camillus and Geddes. Money also will be used to expand the technology in Solvay, where it has been up and running since last year, company President Carmen Branca Jr. said.

Broadband over power line, or BPL, works by using existing electric wires to deliver Internet data to homes and businesses. New Visions leases pole space from utilities and has partnered with the village of Solvay's municipal electric system and National Grid for the project.

Solvay was the first utility in the state to attempt widespread deployment of BPL.

To use the service, customers simply plug a computer modem into an electrical outlet. Advocates of the technology say they hope it will eventually compete with phone and cable systems as a third major provider of Internet access.

New Visions hopes to reach as many as 12,600 homes in the western suburbs with the technology.

"It's exciting that the state has faith and likes the technology, sees its benefits," Branca said. "It's great news because high-speed broadband service is really no longer a luxury. Rather, it's a necessity for the villages, towns and cities of our state. High-speed broadband is the infrastructure of the 21st century."

Gov. David Paterson agrees.

"In an age when our competitiveness depends on fast and easy access to information, too many communities in New York state still lack sufficient broadband access," Paterson has said. "Improved broadband technologies can spur economic development, increase learning opportunities and connect more New Yorkers to the wide array of resources available online."

Branca said he expects work on the system to begin when the weather improves.

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