

# Work Progresses on Newton County Broadband Project

(March 17, 2022) Work on the ground began in earnest this week as specialists arrived in Newton County to initiate environmental and historical assessments of the proposed routes for the DETCOG Broadband Project. DETCOG, the Deep East Texas Council of Governments, has obtained a \$9 million grant to build a high speed wireless broadband network in northern Newton County.

Katlin Fox Brown, an environmental consultant for Traylor & Associates and Valerie Weeks, working with Magellan Advisors, DETCOG's engineering contractor, arrived in Newton and the surrounding area to assess any potential disturbances of environmental or historic sites by the project.

The \$9 million project was funded earlier this year by the Texas General Land Office and will cover much of the northern part of Newton county with fixed-wireless internet connections. The project will connect area towers to provide signals to homes and businesses, linked by approximately 60 miles of fiber optic connections.

When completed, the project will reach more than 2,700 households including approximately 6,700 residents. According to the environmental consultants, the fact that the project will use existing towers and place the new fiber along existing electric co-op rights of way helps to minimize the potential for new issues.

DETCOG project manager Mickey Slimp estimated that once the clearances are achieved and permits are in place, the final engineering can occur in six months or less allowing materials to be ordered and construction to begin.

Lonnie Hunt, the Executive Director of DETCOG, said that the environmental assessment represents a major step forward in the construction project. The environmental team has been participating in weekly planning meetings with DETCOG for the past two months. "DETCOG launched our initiative to improve broadband in the region in 2019," he said. "Our ultimate goal is to ensure that every household and business in the Deep East Texas region has access to reliable and affordable broadband service. While a lot of progress has been made, this project in Newton County is our first construction project. We're excited to get started with it."

Newton County Judge Kenneth Weeks likewise commended the team for their work in the county and was encouraged by their progress. "Getting broadband was a requirement for getting the new plant to locate in Bon Wier," said the Judge, "and this project will open more doors for Newton County."

**Left: This map shows the area to be served by DETCOG'S Northern Newton County Broadband Project. The network will provide service for approximately 6,700 residents. DETCOG continues to seek funding from other sources to extend broadband coverage for all of Deep East Texas.**



**Above: Environmental Consultants Valerie Weeks and Katlin Fox Brown assess tower sites and wetlands south of Newton.**

