



## Mississippi Public Service Commission

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# NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Public Service Commission, Entergy Mississippi, and C Spire team up to tackle rural “digital divide” challenge

*Project will deploy over 300 route miles of fiber-based infrastructure in 15 counties across state*

**Jackson, Miss. (February 7, 2018)** – Entergy and C Spire are teaming up on an \$11 million fiber infrastructure project spanning over 300 miles in 15 Mississippi counties that will open the door for future delivery of a wide variety of next-generation broadband services to consumers and businesses in some of the most isolated and rural parts of the state.

The project is the brainchild of Brandon Presley, chairman of the state's Public Service Commission, and has been on the drawing board for over two years. The massive infrastructure project, one of the largest in the nation, received a final “green light” when the PSC approved an order **Tuesday, Feb. 6** authorizing the work to begin later this spring.

Under terms of the agreement, C Spire will install fiber optic cable and related broadband communications infrastructure for Entergy along five routes that cover 302 miles in 15 counties and pass 21 small towns, cities and communities in rural, hard-to-reach parts of the state, including the Delta, north, central, south and southwest regions.

“This is a win-win-win for Entergy, C Spire and the people of rural Mississippi,” Presley said. “Entergy gets communication enhancements to its statewide electrical service grid, C Spire gets highly-desired fiber infrastructure and the people of our great state who live in some of the most isolated areas will get access to 21<sup>st</sup> century broadband services. This is and will continue to be one of my top priorities.”

The construction project will involve placing fiber optic cable along five separate routes as follows:

- **Delta:** a 92-mile route through Sunflower, Humphreys, Madison and Hinds counties and near the cities of Indianola, Inverness, Isola, Belzoni, Silver City, Yazoo City, Bentonia, Flora and Jackson.

- **North:** a 51-mile stretch in Attala, Leake and Madison counties, including near the towns of McAdams, Kosciusko and Canton.
- **Central:** a 33-mile route through Madison, Rankin and Scott counties and near the towns of Canton, Sand Hill and Morton.
- **South:** a 77-mile route passing through Simpson, Jefferson Davis, Lawrence and Walthall counties and near the towns of Magee, Prentiss, Silver Creek, Monticello and Tylertown.
- **Southwest:** a 49-mile stretch in Franklin and Adams counties that's near the communities of Bude, Meadville, Roxie, Natchez and Eddiceton.

Executives for Entergy and C Spire echoed Presley's praise for the project and predicted that the infrastructure would help make the state more attractive for technology investment, boost economic development and business expansion in communities across the state and add more lucrative, high-paying job opportunities for residents.

"We're excited about partnering with C Spire to modernize our electrical grid and expand rural broadband access in some hard-to-reach areas across the state," said Haley Fisackerly, president and CEO of Entergy Mississippi. "We have about 30,000 customers within five miles of the proposed routes who could potentially have access to broadband service when the project is complete. In addition, all of our customers will benefit from the enhancements to our communication systems that connect our facilities, substations, offices and radio sites." The company provides electric service to an estimated 445,000 customers in 45 counties across the state.

"A robust broadband infrastructure is critical to the success of our efforts to move Mississippi forward by growing the economy, fostering innovation, creating job opportunities and improving the quality of life for all our residents," said Hu Meena, CEO of C Spire, a Mississippi-based diversified telecommunications and technology services company.

Meena said broadband expansion is a key part of the C Spire Tech Movement initiative, an outgrowth of the firm's 2013 groundbreaking Fiber-to-the-Home program, one of the first of its type in the U.S. and the fastest to connect thousands of consumers in nine Mississippi communities to Gigabit speed internet, digital streaming TV and home phone services.

The project with Entergy will help C Spire achieve one of its Tech Movement goals: massive expansion of ultra-fast broadband and fixed wireless internet access to more than 250,000 consumers and businesses across the state, including availability of ultra-fast Gigabit internet service to one out of every five of the state's 250,000 businesses.

The high-tech firm has been on a mission to expand broadband availability and boost average mobile and fixed broadband speeds in Mississippi. The company has installed over 8,000 route miles of fiber optics across the state and has deployed more wireless spectrum in the region than any other communications provider.

In recent years, C Spire's continuing technology investment has played a central role in state gains for average mobile and fixed broadband speeds. The company became the state's fastest internet service provider in 2014 and more than quadrupled speeds following its successful FTTH program.

#### **About Entergy Mississippi**

Entergy Mississippi, Inc. provides electricity to approximately 445,000 customers in 45 counties. Entergy Corporation is an integrated energy company engaged primarily in electric power production and retail distribution operations. Entergy owns and operates power plants with approximately 30,000 megawatts of electric generating capacity, including nearly 9,000 megawatts of nuclear power. Entergy delivers electricity to 2.9 million utility customers in Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas. Entergy has annual revenues of approximately \$10.8 billion and nearly 13,000 employees.

#### **About C Spire**

C Spire is a leading technology company committed to transforming Mississippi through the C Spire Tech Movement, which includes the massive deployment of broadband internet to homes and small businesses, a state-of-the-art digital experience for its customers and team members, technology innovation leadership and the creation and retention of a 21<sup>st</sup> century technology workforce in its region. The company provides world-class, customer-inspired wireless communications, 1 Gigabit consumer Internet access as well as a full suite of dedicated Internet, wireless, IP Voice, data and cloud services for businesses. This news release and other announcements are available at [www.cspire.com/news](http://www.cspire.com/news). For more information about C Spire, visit [www.cspire.com](http://www.cspire.com) or follow us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/cspire](http://www.facebook.com/cspire) or Twitter at [www.twitter.com/cspire](https://twitter.com/cspire).

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