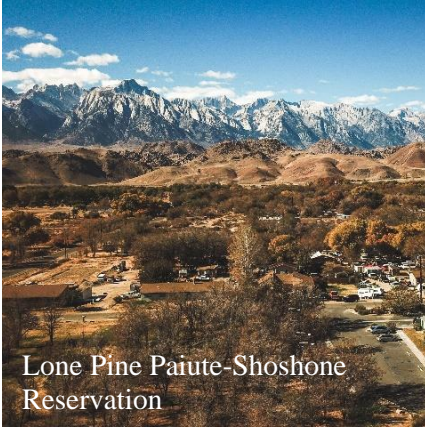


Lone Pine Paiute-Shoshone Emergency Broadband Network

The Digital Divide During COVID-19



High-speed internet access is a fundamental necessity for tribal government operations, community health and wellness and online education for tribal

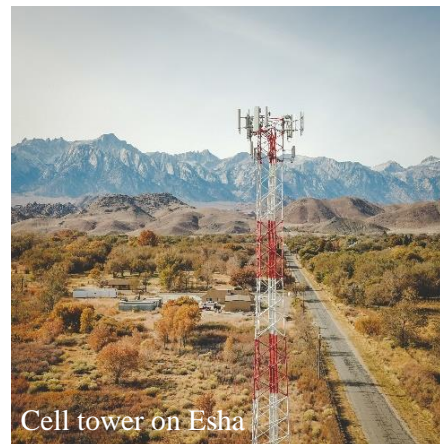
members during the COVID-19 pandemic. Without access to reliable internet, Lone Pine Paiute-Shoshone tribal members face increased challenges when applying for jobs, completing school work, visiting the doctor, participating in virtual meetings or connecting with loved ones. Some families cannot afford local internet prices or equipment necessary for wi-fi or ethernet connection and many students are not able to participate in distance learning due to the lack of consistent access to high speed internet. This is especially concerning because recent studies show that students without dependable access to internet choose not to return to school at a higher rate than their peers.

The Lone Pine Paiute-Shoshone Tribe (LPPST) practices one of the purest forms of direct democracy, giving tribal members the opportunity to speak directly to the community and vote on issues impacting the entire Tribe. However, due to the health risks involved with COVID-19, the practice of gathering large groups indoors is no longer feasible. Not being able to gather in addition to the

lack of internet access has caused the suspension of general council meetings, which causes issues with governing the tribe.

The hard truth is, there is a digital divide in America that particularly impacts rural tribal communities. This digital divide is essentially a gap created between different demographics of people in their ability to access and effectively use technology. Developing a high-speed broadband network can address the digital divide by allowing rural tribes to overcome geographic isolation and provide emergency communications and educational and economic opportunities for the tribal community. In the wealthiest country in the world, this digital divide is an unacceptable disparity and it is essential now more than ever to provide tribal members with the knowledge and resources necessary to progress and succeed during this digital age.

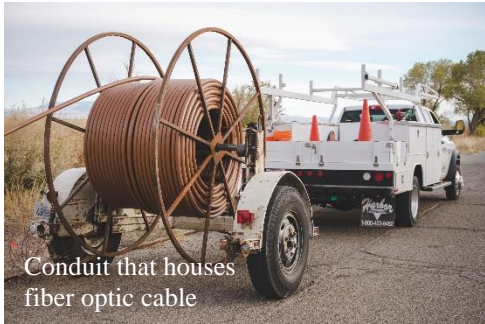
LPPST Emergency Network



After careful consideration, the tribal officers determined that establishing an emergency wireless network for the Lone Pine Paiute-Shoshone

Reservation (LPPSR) would best serve the community and their ability to respond to COVID-19. In addition, an emergency network would assist the tribe in addressing issues related to public health, education and continuity of tribal

government operations stemming from the pandemic. **The emergency network will blanket the entire reservation, providing wireless internet connectivity to every single tribal household for free.** With a robust wireless network, tribal members living on the reservation will enjoy easier access to a



Conduit that houses fiber optic cable

strong, high-speed internet connection. Having access to high-speed internet provides the

opportunity and ability for tribal members to participate in telemedicine while creating more privacy for online classes, meetings or when communicating with doctors and/or loved ones. This reliable internet access will also allow students living on the LPPSR the ability to distance learn from anywhere on the reservation, giving tribal students the opportunity to educate themselves and complete school work online.

During these difficult times, it is essential for government operations to continue with the full participation of the entire tribal community. The emergency network will allow the LPPST to resume



Westech Industries boring along Esha

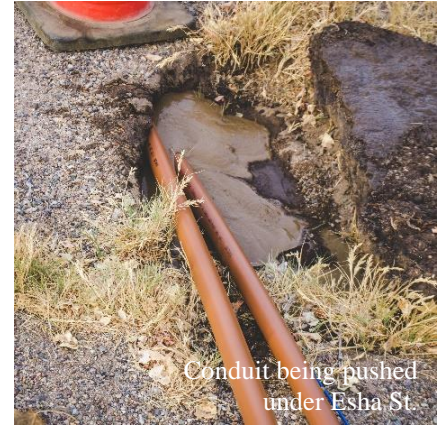
general council meetings by providing the ability to stream meetings online. These virtual meetings will give all tribal members, on and off rez, the ability to participate in

meetings while staying updated on tribal operations.

Project Progress

For phase one of the network project, the tribe contracted with Westech Industries to bore along the East side of Esha Street in order to lay fiber optic

cable. The fiber connects the tribe's access to the Digital 395 internet backbone to the cell tower on the corner of Esha. The next step is to mount broadband equipment on the cell tower that will beam internet across the rez. Each tribal household will be given equipment to receive the wi-fi signal.



Conduit being pushed under Esha St.

Hotspots:

In collaboration with Information Technology Disaster Resource Center (ITDRC), the tribal officers have also authorized the installation of 'community internet hotspots' at the Tribal Office, Wellness Center and Cultural Center. These hotspots provide wi-fi internet at a distance of 40 yards per location. Tribal members can use this wi-fi, free of charge, by choosing **ProjectConnect** when at one of these locations. These hotspots are meant as a temporary, emergency solution for community members without consistent internet access in their homes.

Visit www.lppsr.org For more information and updates on the tribe's broadband network project as well as a list of organizations the tribe is partnering with.

Information Technology Disaster Resource Center
<https://www.itdrc.org/>