

Pierce Pepin Cooperative Services (PPCS) launched its broadband subsidiary, SwiftCurrent Connect, on July 13, 2021. Just one year later, SwiftCurrent Connect has built over 150 miles of fiber-optic line and its 100<sup>th</sup> customer was connected in mid-June.

In August 2021, Phase I design, pole inspections, and make-ready work were completed. Construction began in September 2021 and passed by 1500 homes. The path for the fiber-optic cable follows PPCS power lines: fiber-optic cable is overhead where the power lines are overhead and buried where the power lines are underground. The first customer was connected in January 2022. In preparation for the summer construction season, design work for Phase II began in January 2022. Pole inspections and make-ready work were completed for Phase II in June 2022.

SwiftCurrent Connect faced several trials along the way as the new company was getting established. The staff worked behind the scenes to set up all the back-office software to manage customer accounts and continues to work with local and state partners to secure grant money. There have been shortages of equipment caused by supply chain issues, as well as interference from Mother Nature. For example, twice this spring shipments of replacement poles needed for the make-ready work were redirected to other cooperatives due to storm damage.

“We’ve learned a lot about picking our partners and making sure they have the same commitment to the job that we do each day,” said Nate Boettcher, PPCS president and CEO. “We’ve learned to be nimble and to adapt to change quickly. We’re thankful for the patience of everyone who has waited to get connected and for those who are waiting for future areas to be completed.”

PPCS was established to provide the essential service of electricity to rural areas in western Wisconsin and celebrated its 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary in April 2022. Similarly, SwiftCurrent Connect is a broadband company that brings the essential service of dependable high-speed, fiber-optic internet to unserved and underserved areas of western Wisconsin and is built for the same kind of longevity.



*In June 2022, SwiftCurrent Connect's 100<sup>th</sup> customer was connected to fiber-optic broadband internet. The Fjelstad family, Heather, Zac, and their two children, Roy (left) and Roz (right) are thrilled to have dependable internet service.*