

GoNetSpeed Utility Pole Replacement & Tree Trimming Project

New fiber optic service by GoNetSpeed is being installed in East Aurora. Up to 250 utility poles will be replaced and extensive tree trimming may be required on many village trees. Existing old poles will remain in place for an indefinite time period leaving a double eyesore of 400 plus poles (old & new). The Village Board has no power to approve or deny this work.

Since many old trees have limbs that cross very close to power lines, they're going to be trimmed. In a recent social media post the Village Tree Board stated "We understand this will be upsetting, but we're doing everything we can to reduce the worst of the impacts."

If you have a dispute with a utility company over tree trimming you can contact the NYS Public Service Commission's Office of Consumer Services at 800-342-3377.

Who approved this project?

This project was approved by NYSEG and is being paid for by GoNetSpeed.

Who owns the poles?

NYSEG owns the utility poles. GoNetSpeed, has contracted with them to install new fiber optic service but higher poles than the existing ones are required.

Who Will Do the Trimming?

GoNetSpeed has hired O'Connell Electric to replace the old poles. As part of this project, they will be trimming trees that have grown into the power lines. O'Connell Electric says they have an ISA-certified arborist overseeing the tree work to ensure it's done safely and with care.

How much will the trees be trimmed?

State regulations require trimming up to 10 feet away from each wire and 15 feet above the lines.

"I want to be home when they come." Can the Village require GoNetSpeed to provide a street schedule?

At the time of this writing, concerned citizens are attempting to secure a street schedule. In the meantime, the company has been putting leaflets on resident's doorknobs.

Will the trees be trimmed on just the pole side of the streets or both sides of the streets wherever the wires are located?

To date, it appears that all the wires between the poles will be replaced and that is where the most damage is going to be done. The trees are moving into dormancy now, so the pruning will be more noticeable in the spring when the trees leaf out.

Will trees and/or branches on homeowner's front lawns be impacted? What are homeowner's rights?

Utilities are required to provide uninterrupted service to homes. According to the NYS Department of Public Works, a utility, company, or subcontractor is required to secure homeowner consent prior working on private property. If a homeowner refuses consent and the privately owned vegetation interferes with power delivery, then the utility rights could supersede homeowner rights. These cases sometimes end up in court.

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When will the old poles be removed?

Different companies use NYSEG poles for their wiring. (Eg. Spectrum, Verizon, etc) The various companies will be responsible for moving their wires from the old poles to the new. Unfortunately, the lowest wires are telephone landline wires owned by Verizon. There is a financial disincentive for Verizon to maintain or remove those lines. NYSEG can't remove the old poles until Verizon removes their wires. This could be a very long wait.

What is the Village Tree Board Doing?

The Tree Board will be in close contact with their arborist to help monitor the work and minimize cutting trees where possible. Their goal is to keep the trees healthy and use this trimming opportunity to reduce the need for drastic tree work in the future. The Tree Board is working with the Village Board to add new funding for future tree maintenance to reduce the possibility of this happening again.

How Can I Help?

The Tree Board consists of a small group of volunteers, and can't monitor every tree all the time. If you notice any concerning tree work or have questions, please reach out, You can contact the village Tree Board on Facebook or email them at EastAuroraTreeBoard@gmail.com

Will new trees be planted?

The Village Tree Board states: "We're not sitting still as the canopy around us is chopped! The village is planting over a dozen new trees this fall, with more planned for Spring. If you'd like to participate in our planting program, visit our website (<https://www.east-aurora.ny.us/government/tree-board> (<https://www.east-aurora.ny.us/government/tree-board>)) for more information." The Tree Board is working to enhance their planting program with better protections for new trees so that tree canopy replacements can live long, healthy lives.

The Tree Board is also working with the Village Board to try and install conduit as major road work occurs in order to enable power lines to be eventually buried - this is costly and will probably take decades.

Village Administrator, Shane Krieger states “We plant trees every year and will plant them in front of residences that request them”.

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