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# Governor Northam Announces More Than \$29.6 Million to Expand Broadband Access

## Five projects across 11 localities awarded Virginia Telecommunications Initiative grants to help connect over 11,700 homes, businesses, and community institutions

**RICHMOND**—Governor Ralph Northam today announced that Virginians living and working in 11 localities will gain access high-speed internet thanks to more than \$29.6 million in grants awarded through the Virginia Telecommunication Initiative (VATI). The funding will support five projects, connecting more than 11,700 households, businesses, and anchor institutions to broadband service, and leveraging over \$34 million in private and local investments.

Administered by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), VATI provides targeted financial assistance to extend broadband service to areas that are currently unserved by a provider. In his 2020 budget, Governor Northam made an historic investment of nearly \$50 million in VATI funding. His proposed budget invests an additional \$15 million in fiscal year 2022 to maintain this significant level of funding.

“Now more than ever, we must ensure that Virginians in every part of our Commonwealth have access to reliable, high-speed internet,” **said Governor Northam**. “With these grants, we will help bridge the digital divide in unserved communities and provide thousands of households and businesses with the connections they need to work, learn, and thrive.”

“Since day one of the Northam Administration, broadband expansion has been a key priority to connect our unserved Virginians,” **said Secretary of Commerce and Trade Brian Ball**. “These grants will connect more than 11,000 households, businesses and community anchors to high-

speed internet, allowing them important opportunities in education, work, and healthcare.”

Projects were selected through a competitive process that evaluated each project for demonstrated need and benefit for the community, applicant readiness and capacity, and the cost and leverage of the proposed project. The level of funding awarded is based on the infrastructure needs in the project area.

In this application year, VATI received 45 applications from 53 units of local government that partnered with 26 internet service providers, requesting more than \$105 million in funding. The five projects announced today are the first round of high-ranked projects. These projects are either unaffected by the recently announced Federal Communications Commission’s Phase I of Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) preliminary awards or have already been re-scoped by the applicant to remove overlap with RDOF funded areas. A second round of awards of the remaining high-ranked projects, including those that have been re-scoped and re-evaluated due to the impact of RDOF will be announced utilizing the remaining available funds in the coming months. Additional information on VATI is available [here](#).

### **The following projects will be awarded in round one of the 2021 VATI grants:**

#### **Botetourt County and Lumos**

**\$1,364,337**

Botetourt County, through a partnership with internet service provider Lumos, will extend its broadband network in the county. The project will bring broadband access to 548 serviceable units, including 30 businesses, through the construction of 59 miles of fiber-optic cable.

#### **Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission and Point Broadband**

**\$16,285,217**

Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission will construct 1,312 miles of fiber through a partnership with Point Broadband. The project includes the counties of Buchanan, Dickenson, Russell, and Tazewell and will provide access to 8,335 serviceable units, including 82 businesses.

#### **LENOWISCO Planning District Commission and Scott County Telephone Cooperative**

**\$1,230,563**

LENOWISCO Planning District Commission, in partnership with Scott County Telephone Cooperative, will construct 73 miles of fiber at gigabit speeds in Lee County, and provide access to 679 total serviceable units.

#### **Mecklenburg County and EMPOWER Broadband**

**\$449,381**

Mecklenburg County will construct over 22 miles of fiber in partnership with EMPOWER Broadband. The project will connect 414 serviceable units to broadband at gigabit speeds, including 12 businesses.

#### **Northern Neck Planning District Commission and All Points Broadband**

**\$10,288,069.82**

Northern Neck Planning District Commission, in partnership with All Points Broadband, will construct a regional network that will provide gigabit-capable, fiber-to-the-home broadband to

unserved locations in the counties of King George, Northumberland, Richmond, and Westmoreland. The project will provide access to 1,767 total serviceable units, including 31 businesses.

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