



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ATTENTION:

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Fannin County Awarded \$4.5 Million Broadband Project

BLUE RIDGE, Ga., Feb. 1, 2022 – Governor Brian P. Kemp and House Speaker David Ralston (R-Blue Ridge) joined by members of the Broadband Infrastructure Committee and state leaders, today announced almost \$408 million in preliminary awards which will provide communities, households, and businesses in 70 Georgia counties access to faster and more reliable broadband. 49 American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) grant projects were awarded of which the Fannin County Development Authority was one of the recipients.

The high-speed broadband initiative for rural Georgia was the result of the leadership of the House Rural Development Council created in 2017 by Speaker Ralston, Rep. Terry England (R-Auburn) and the late Rep. Jay Powell (R-Camilla). Also active on the project was Senator Steve Gooch (R-Dahlonega) and Rep. Rick Jasperse (R-Jasper).

The Fannin County Development Authority is partnering with Ellijay Telephone Company (“ETC”) and leveraging a portion of their existing fiber network and resources, to build approximately 80 miles of high-speed fiber optics to serve 996 customers in 71 unserved census block groups.

“ETC is excited for this new opportunity to continue serving communities across North Georgia. We will be leveraging our fiber optic infrastructure near many of these unserved census blocks. Using our fiber, along with these state grants, now makes these locations feasible. We want to thank the Fannin County Development Authority for allowing us to partner with them on their application and all those community members who wrote letters of support for this application.” states Jason Smith, COO of ETC.

The project proposal states that “Fannin County has 24% (Georgia Broadband Availability, 2021) of the population deemed to be unserved by the FCC’s minimum broadband definition of 25/3Mb. The area of Fannin County is highly impacted by, and

reliant upon, tourism and Broadband or rather the lack thereof is a serious impediment for current businesses and prospective economic development. The lack of access to qualified broadband, even more so during the COVID-19 pandemic, has created obstacles for the community due to lack of access to remote work, education, telehealth, and business operations.”

The Fannin County Development Authority’s broadband project is seeking to resolve these problems by:

- Reducing the number of unserved broadband locations in our county
- Building fiber-optic broadband network capable of symmetrical 2Gbps download and 2Gbps upload service
- Share and promote our fiber broadband infrastructure benefits to visitors, prospective residents and industries

The project was awarded \$3,013,576 ARPA grant funds, along with matching funds of \$1,519,265 from ETC, for a total of \$4,532,841.

The project should commence shortly and will be ongoing through at least 2026.

About Ellijay Telephone Company:

Established in 1903 as Ellijay Telephone Company (ETC), today ETC is a diversified communications company providing internet, telephone, cable television and security services. ETC serves residents and businesses in north Georgia and Tennessee. ETC actively evaluates opportunities to expand broadband in and around its service area. Currently, ETC has 2,708 miles of copper lines, 2,010 miles of coax cable and 652 miles of high-speed fiber.

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