

CAROLINE COUNTY PRESS RELEASE



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County Administrator*

CAROLINE COUNTY AWARDED VIRGINIA TELECOMMUNICATIONS INITIATIVE (VATI) BROADBAND GRANTS

Award Will Enable Expansion of Broadband Access to All Unserved Areas of Caroline

Bowling Green, VA – Caroline County has been awarded a total of \$8,478,334 in Virginia Telecommunications Initiative (VATI) grants to expand access to broadband service. The grant awards will enable the County to achieve universal broadband coverage and make reliable high speed internet service available to every home and business in Caroline.

Grant awards totaling \$59.5 million for 14 projects serving 20 localities throughout Virginia were announced by Governor Glenn Youngkin on May 11. Thirty-five grant applications totaling more than \$300 million in funding requests were received in this VATI grant cycle. 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.

Two separate VATI grants were awarded to Caroline – 1) \$2,032,334 to expand access to approximately 854 homes and businesses west of Interstate 95 (service provider Verizon); and 2) \$6,446,000 to expand access to approximately 3,910 homes and businesses east of Interstate 95 (service provider Breezeline). Funding for a portion of the homes east of I-95 is being provided through the Federal Communications Commission Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) program.

“This is a great opportunity to extend access to the internet into rural areas”, said Board of Supervisors Chairman Floyd W. Thomas. “Caroline citizens and businesses will be able to take advantage of eCommerce and expand their footprint. I want to thank the County staff, the Broadband Committee for their hard work over the years and all the patient citizens who now see this becoming a reality.”

The projects are expected to take approximately three years to complete construction. The estimated total cost of both projects combined is \$29,335,835. Both will be paid for by a combination of VATI grant dollars, financial contributions from both internet service providers and County matching funds. Verizon committed to contributing approximately \$4,585,701 (or approximately 60%) toward the cost of the west of I-95 project as part of the VATI grant application. Breezeline has committed to contributing approximately \$11,672,200 (or approximately 54%) for the east of I-95 project.

The Board of Supervisors has committed approximately \$4,543,200 in local matching funds for the VATI grants. A total of \$3,955,200 from the County's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds has previously been committed toward the required local match. The remaining funds will come from the County's Undesignated General Fund Balance over a period of years.

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