

# From Unserved to Connected Virginia's Leaders in Broadband Expansion

## Highlighting Broadband Progress Across Virginia: Part One

Across the Commonwealth, strategic investments and strong partnerships are expanding broadband access and connecting communities that have historically lacked reliable service. With support from the Department of Housing and Community Development's (DHCD) Office of Broadband, localities have partnered with internet service providers through the [Virginia Telecommunication Initiative \(VATI\)](#) to connect more than 200,000 locations in Virginia between 2022 and 2025, with Albemarle, Bedford, Louisa, and Mecklenburg counties leading the way in broadband expansion.\*

*\*Location data is sourced from the FCC Broadband Serviceable Location Fabric and reflects locations connected between June 2022 and June 2025.*

## ALBEMARLE COUNTY

5,275 Locations Connected

Albemarle County's 726 square miles span a unique mix of urban, suburban, and deeply rural communities. Nearly two decades ago, former IT and Broadband Office Director, Mike Culp, began working with neighborhoods, providers, and state leaders to expand broadband access countywide. Since then, the Broadband Office has improved connectivity across rural and suburban areas through a mix of technologies, supported by five consecutive Virginia Telecommunication Initiative (VATI) awards implemented in partnership with Firefly and CenturyLink. Together, these investments are expected to connect nearly 11,000 households by the end of the fiscal year, bringing Albemarle County to 99.9% broadband coverage.



Albemarle Broadband Office holds a public information session for residents.

*As part of Albemarle's efforts to address broader digital inclusion challenges, the county has held numerous regional focus groups to better understand community needs. Through these discussions, residents have shared how high-speed internet has transformed their ability to work, receive healthcare, and build community.*

# BEDFORD COUNTY

10,277 Locations Connected

As a largely rural county with mountainous terrain, Bedford has historically faced barriers to broadband access. Through early expansion efforts and more than \$25 million in VATI funding awarded in 2022, the Bedford County Broadband Authority helped transform countywide connectivity. As of 2026, coverage has improved dramatically through a mix of state, federal, and private investment and partnerships with Zitel, Shentel, RiverStreet Networks, and Verizon, enabling the extension of high-speed internet to more than 10,000 homes since 2022. While some remote areas still await service, Bedford expects to be among the first large rural counties in Virginia to achieve universal broadband coverage by early 2027.



Wireline broadband infrastructure under construction in Bedford County.

*“Even simple things, like streaming, connecting with family, or managing home, banking, and medical services that were basically nonexistent are now easily accessible. Having dependable broadband has brought Bedford closer to the rest of the world and given us new opportunities to thrive right where we live.” – Debbie Clark, Bedford County resident served by Verizon FIOS*

# LOUISA COUNTY

11,037 Locations Connected

Not long ago, nearly 75% of Louisa County had no access to high-speed internet, and providing access to every home and business in Louisa was expected to take decades. In September 2020, the Louisa County Board of Supervisors charted a new course across the digital divide, earmarking \$15 million to expand broadband access to all unserved locations in Louisa County. With the help of state and federal funding, Louisa partnered with Firefly, Central Virginia Electric Cooperative, Rappahannock Electric Cooperative, and Dominion Energy to leverage existing electric infrastructure in a model that is now being replicated across Virginia.



County officials and utility partners announce their VATI partnership at a press conference.

*Connectivity is significantly improving Louisa County residents’ daily lives, from Deputy Director of Community Development (and horse farmer) Tom Egeland’s ability to remotely monitor his horses in the barn, to Small Country Campground owner Bob Miller’s use of broadband to enhance customer service for guests.*

# MECKLENBURG COUNTY

6,405 Locations Connected

Since 2018, Mecklenburg County has partnered with Virginia-based provider EMPOWER Broadband to expand high-speed service to underserved rural residents. Progress accelerated in 2022 when Mecklenburg joined Brunswick and Halifax Counties in securing a \$69 million VATI grant to support a \$154 million regional project serving more than 14,000 addresses. Building on that momentum, county partners secured additional VATI awards in 2023 and 2024. Today, EMPOWER's fiber network delivers reliable broadband to 15,000 addresses in Mecklenburg County and to dozens of Mecklenburg businesses that previously lacked true broadband access, enabling modern operations, statewide connectivity, and new economic opportunities.



EMPOWER has expanded its network from a 135-mile fiber ring in 2021 to 2,900 miles by mid-2025.

*"Before having the high-speed internet installed... we could never do more than one thing at a time, and it was hard with homeschooling. Now we can watch Netflix, have three computers online, and have all our cellphones connected. It has made a difference with homeschooling my daughter." – Robin Barnes, Mecklenburg County resident served by EMPOWER*

## INTERESTED IN BEING FEATURED AS A COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT?

The Office of Broadband invites members of the Commonwealth to share recent accomplishments, news, or upcoming broadband or digital opportunity initiatives. Please submit your information by completing [this form](#) and emailing it to [broadband@dhcd.virginia.gov](mailto:broadband@dhcd.virginia.gov).

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BROADBAND



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