



Supervisor Tony Buffington
Blue Ridge District
NewsFlash



Broadband Expansion Efforts Continue with Full County Support

VATI Grant Possibility Offers Real Chance of Providing Fiber-to-the-Home Access to the Majority of Loudoun's Remaining Un and Underserved Residents and Businesses...

Sent: May 7, 2021

Access to the internet is no longer a convenience. It has become a necessity and should long ago have been classified as a "utility" by our state and federal governments. Unfortunately, they have yet to accomplish this much needed action.



According to the 2020 National Community Survey for Loudoun County, six of ten respondents designated increased broadband access as either essential or very important to them.

Therefore, ensuring access for western Loudoun residents and businesses remains a top priority for my office.

See below for updates on the work we are doing to bring coverage to un and underserved portions of the County.

Emergency Broadband Implementation Plan Update

In November of 2020, Supervisor Kershner and I brought forward an Emergency Broadband Implementation plan which included direction to County staff to report back to the Board on a quarterly basis with updates on our efforts to address broadband expansion in un and underserved portions of the County.

On May 4th the Board received the latest quarterly update. You can find the complete report [here](#), however below is a summary of key issues.

I want to thank everyone who emailed my office and the entire Board of Supervisors prior to the meeting, as well as those who spoke at the meeting to share their story of broadband inequality. Your voices and needs make a difference and are helping to ensure progress!

Update 1: Virginia Telecommunications Initiative (VATI) Grant Opportunity

The Virginia Telecommunication Initiative (VATI) program is a state-funded grant program for last-mile broadband to the home deployment.

On March 15, 2021, county staff published a RFEI to seek private partnership for VATI submissions. The RFEI was publicly advertised, reaching over 70 private entities. Staff received five responses that were subsequently reviewed and evaluated based on a number of qualification requirements (see grid below).

Partner Name	Broadband Type	County Contribution	Households	Notes & County Impacts
All Points Broadband	Fiber to the Home	~\$4M	~8,200	Previous VATI success with similar utility partnership model in other VA counties.
Lumos	Fiber to the Home	\$0	~450	Previous VATI success with other VA count(ies); sister company with Segra
SWS Tech	Wireless	\$0	~2,500	Designed and installed the network for Loudoun County School systems to enable Covid-19 testing and tracking technology.
T-Mobile	Wireless	\$0	~10,000+	Design requires an upgrade to six existing towers and an additional 14 new towers in western Loudoun County.
Zitel	Fiber to the Home	\$0	~4200	Previous VATI success with other VA count(ies);

Having reviewed the above responses to the RFEI, the County is now proceeding with a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with All Points Broadband (APB) and its partnership with Dominion to support the VATI Grant request.

This Grant application provides a very real opportunity for delivery of fiber to the home for the overwhelming majority of Loudoun's remaining un and underserved residents and businesses! If approved - this would literally almost single handedly, fix our remaining problem...

In addition to being a strong and proven ISP, All Points Broadband has a track record of securing state VATI Grants in surrounding localities.

My office is working closely with County staff in an effort to ensure the forthcoming MOA is void of non-compete language and provides consumer speed and cost protections.

Update 2: Remote Site Connectivity Project Request for Proposal Process

This project known as the "Dark Fiber/Private Wide-Area Network (PWAN)" expansion project, refers to the continued build out of a PWAN by Segra to five western Loudoun County facilities not covered in the original deployment of dark fiber to County facilities.

- Bluemont Community Center
- Philomont Community Center
- Philomont Fire & Rescue Station
- Loudoun Heights Fire & Rescue Station
- Loudoun Heights Public Safety Radio Tower

This weeks update included addition of a sixth facility to the project:

- Bluemont Public Safety Radio Tower

Upon completion, this new dark fiber project recently approved and funded by the Board, will connect the remaining unserved Loudoun County facilities with fiber, **and provide a middle-mile network that can be leveraged by ISP's (such as APB in their VATI grant proposal) to deliver last-mile broadband services to currently un and underserved portions of the County.**

Update 3: Other State and Federal Opportunities

This weeks update to the Board included an explanation of the following additional opportunities that the county is actively pursuing:

- The Virginia Telecommunication Initiative (see above)
- Community Project Funding request to the Committee on Appropriations from the office of U.S. Congresswoman Jennifer Wexton
- The American Rescue Plan Act
- USDA: Community Connect program
- USDA: ReConnect program of loans and grants
- NSF: Smart and Connected Communities
- VRA: Virginia Pooled Financing Program (VPFP)
- The Virginia Initiative for Growth & Opportunity (GO Virginia) grant funds

I would like to offer a big "Thank You" to the county staff for their efforts in conducting an exhaustive search of over 30 available state and federal opportunities. Staff's explanation of these eight opportunities and County qualifications can be found [here](#) (pages 6-8).

Update 4: Cable TV Franchise Renewal Process

The driver of network expansion for private companies is return on investment, so it is much harder for providers to financially justify the cost of network extensions to rural areas such as western Loudoun.

While the County can regulate cable TV service, **we have no legal authority to regulate broadband**. Internet services have been deemed by the FCC, and supported by the Courts, to be an information service, and cannot be regulated by any local authority.

The County's primary goal in negotiating the renewal of the cable TV Franchise agreements is to seek to expand the service areas to underserved areas of western Loudoun; thereby, expanding Broadband access through the expansion of cable TV service.

Waterford Telephone Company Closure

As many of you have heard and/or experienced by now, the Waterford Telephone Company (WTC) recently announced via its [website](#) that the company will officially close on May 31, 2021.

I realize this sudden closure is devastating to many western Loudoun residents and businesses who have come to rely on this internet service provider (ISP). Since learning of the disruption several weeks ago, my office has made numerous attempts to contact the WTC owner to see if anything could be done that might prevent the closure; however, all efforts have been met with negative results and given that WTC is a private entity, the County has no legal authority to prevent its closure.

Anyone negatively affected by the closure of WTC is encouraged to review the County's [list of known area ISP's](#) in their effort to obtain replacement services.



Loudoun Broadband Access ~~Could~~ Extend West!!!

Coronavirus - We're in it together, we'll get through it together - Tony

Be safe!

Tony Buffington
Blue Ridge District Supervisor
tony.buffington@loudoun.gov

Rachael Holmes
Chief of Staff

rachael.e.holmes@loudoun.gov

Robin Bartok
Legislative Aide
robin.w.bartok@loudoun.gov

Christi Maple
Legislative Aide
katie.patru@loudoun.gov

Click [here](#) to Like us on Facebook!



Disclaimer: Supervisor Buffington and his staff make every effort to share accurate, timely, relevant and helpful information; however, he nor his staff are liable for inaccuracies, errors, omissions, misrepresentations or otherwise unhelpful or harmful information. The sharing of third party non-County affiliated information is not an endorsement of such information and he nor his staff are liable for inaccuracies, errors, omissions, misrepresentations, or otherwise unhelpful or harmful information from the sharing of such third party non-County affiliated information. Use of the information shared by Supervisor Buffington and his staff is at sole discretion of the user(s), and user(s) accepts all liability and responsibility for his/her/their actions regarding use of the information shared.

Blue Ridge District | 1 Harrison Street, S.E. 5th Floor, PO Box 70000, Leesburg, VA 20177-7000

[Constant Contact Data Notice](#)

Sent by tony.buffington@loudoun.gov powered by

