



Supervisor Tony Buffington  
**Blue Ridge District**  
*NewsFlash*



## **Broadband Expansion Update**

**VATI Grant Opportunity Provides Real Chance of Connecting Remaining 8,800 Unserved Rural Residents & Businesses...**

Sent: October 12, 2021



## Loudoun Broadband Access ~~Could~~ <sup>WILL</sup> Extend West!!!

### **Emergency Broadband Implementation Plan Update**

In November of 2020, Supervisor Kershner and I brought forward an Emergency Broadband Implementation plan directing 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.

At the October 5th Business Meeting, the Board received our latest quarterly update, which focused on the status of our Virginia Telecommunications Initiative (VATI) Grant Application. You can watch staff's presentation to the Board [here](#) and read the complete report [here](#), however, below is a summary of these updates.

### **Loudoun's VATI Grant Application Successfully Submitted!**

The VATI grant is a state-funded program for last-mile broadband to the home fiber deployment. This Grant application provides Loudoun with a very strong opportunity for delivery of fiber-to-the-home for

the remaining 8,800 un and underserved residents and businesses!  
**Basically, if you're not currently served by Comcast or Verizon, this grant - should it be awarded by the state - along with Loudoun's contribution and our partnership with All Points Broadband and Dominion Energy, would provide fiber access to your home!**

On September 13, 2021, the county successfully submitted it's fully completed VATI application! The application can be found in its entirety on the DHCD [website](#). **The anticipated state announcement of award recipients will occur in late December of 2021 or January of 2022.**

There were 57 VATI Grant applications this year, a 20% increase in applications from counties and municipalities across the Commonwealth. Of the 57 applicants, our submission is one of 26 that are based on public-private partnerships with local fund matching amounts in excess of VATI requirements. This is a positive aspect of our application that should work in our favor!

Loudoun has allocated \$12.425 million of American Rescue Plan Act funding it received from the federal government, towards the local funding match criteria of the VATI Grant application.

Of note for this update is that the state has now eliminated previous distance limitations for those who sign up for service within the first 12 months of service being offered to their neighborhood for above ground fiber-to-the-home delivery. Previously, the proposal would have required customer contribution costs for properties further than 500 feet from the main line. With this fee now eliminated, prospective customers will only be required to pay a \$199 installation fee regardless of their distance from the main line if the VATI Grant is awarded to Loudoun. The only exception to this would be for homeowner's wishing to have their last mile fiber-to-the-home buried. Homeowner's desiring this option would be required to cover the cost of that last mile line burial.

In [a previous update](#), I shared the process that Loudoun followed to create this public-private partnership between the Loudoun, All

Points Broadband, and Dominion Energy for the VATI grant submission.

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### **Remote Site Connectivity Project Update**

The Remote Site Connectivity Project refers to the continued build out of a Dark Fiber/Private Wide Area Network by Segra to these western Loudoun County facilities:

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

On September 21, 2021, the Board approved a contract award for Leased Dark Fiber of the Wide Area Network Services to Segra for the period October 1, 2021, through March 31, 2029, in the estimated amount of \$4,573,1201.

Additionally, staff will now pursue the USDA Community Connect program grant in an effort to offset some or all of the \$4.5 million cost of this expansion of the Dark Fiber for the Remote Site Connectivity Project.

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### **Other Updates from the Q3 2021 Update**

The October 5th presentation to the Board included an update on the Verizon TV Franchise Renewal Agreement, use of ARPA funds for interim broadband connection projects, and low-income broadband assistance opportunities.

These updates can be found starting on page 4 of the [Information Item](#).

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Access to the internet is no longer a nice 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.**

I want to thank everyone who continues to email my office, the entire Board of Supervisors, as well as those who speak at the Board Business Meeting to share your stories of broadband inequality. Your voices and needs make a difference and are helping to ensure progress!

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All our best!

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