



# Albemarle Broadband Authority “ABBA”

## Formed by the County of Albemarle, VA Board of Supervisors

### **Broadband Status Report 1st Quarter CY2021**

#### **March 31, 2021**

The Albemarle Broadband Authority (ABBA) reviewed and is submitting the Broadband Status Report for first quarter calendar year 2021 (January 1, 2021 through March 31, 2021). The report is provided to the County of Albemarle, VA Board of Supervisors as information. This report provides summary level information on all activities completed and underway by ABBA. Here is this quarter’s *From the Chair*:

*ABBA has had discussions with local ISPs and other providers in CY 2021 Q1 to determine what the appetite is for extensive buildout of fiber to both unserved and underserved areas of the county. At this time, underserved would mean anyone who does not have a consistent and reliable broadband connection of at least a 25Mbps down and 3Mbps up internet service, although ABBA will reconsider this target in light of the recent year’s experiences. The goal is to see if it is possible to develop an action plan for the delivering fiber to the entire county. 2020 has made it abundantly clear that ABBA’s goal needs to be accelerated from a “when we can” basis to an “as soon as possible” timeline.*

Bucky Walsh  
ABBA Chair

#### **Virginia Telecommunication Initiative (VATI) 2021 Update**

The highlight of this report is the notice of award for Virginia Telecommunication Initiative 2021 Grant projects. ABBA and Albemarle County are to receive \$2,276,110.00 in state provided grant funds. The 18-month program will install over 100 miles of fiber to provide the opportunity for 1,675 locations to connect to fiber internet. The general locations are as follows:

Jones Mill Road, Bucks Elbow, Stoney Point & Campbell/Cobham, Snow Hill Ln, Milton Hills, Box Holly/Taylor’s Gap, Advance Mills/Fray Rd, Tilman Rd/Meriweather Hill, Old Garth Heights. A team is working on a map to allow lookups by address; another is working on finalizing the contract with the state; and another team is working with CenturyLink/Lumen the company who will build, own, and operate the fiber network.

#### **Virginia Telecommunication Initiative (VATI) 2020 Update**

The VATI funded fiber broadband program with CenturyLink from 2020 continued momentum with two of the eight projects now accepting install appointments as of April 13, 2021. By May 14, 2021 all 8 project areas may be offering install appointments.

The project includes eight subprojects which will pass by 837 locations in various unserved areas of the County, offering up to gigabit internet speeds to residences and businesses along the routes. CenturyLink continues to email updates; here is the one from April 12, 2021:



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Here are some details and an **ESTIMATED** timeframe for each area. Please note, these are only estimated dates and schedules can fluctuate as work is being completed.

1. **Buffalo Hills** – Launched
2. **Coles Rolling Road**– Launched
3. **Hatton** – We’re finishing final testing and we expect to begin taking orders on Thursday, April 15<sup>th</sup>.
4. **Keene** – We’re finishing final testing and we expect to begin taking orders on Thursday, April 15<sup>th</sup>.
5. **Scottsville Road** – Approximately 92% of fiber has been placed and equipment has been installed. Once fiber has been placed crews will begin splicing and the behind the scenes work. Our estimated date to be able to place orders is April 16-20<sup>th</sup>. Our center will contact those that reserved a spot as soon as all systems are updated.
6. **Green Creek Road** - Crews have placed approximately 99% of the required fiber. Fiber splicing and behind the scenes work and testing will follow. Estimated to be able to place orders remains at April 30<sup>th</sup>.
7. **Howardsville** – Fiber placement is complete and crews have completed approximately half of the required splicing. Behind the scenes work and testing will follow. Estimated to be able to place orders remains at April 30<sup>th</sup>.
8. **Watts Passage** – For Watts Passage crews have placed approximately 80% of the fiber. Once fiber has been placed crews will begin splicing and the behind the scenes work. Estimated to be able to place orders moved to May 14<sup>th</sup>.

If you have not reserved your spot to upgrade your service to CenturyLink Fiber Internet please call **1-888-261-7419** and talk to one of our representatives. This will allow our team to notify you as soon as you are able to place your order.

We’ve received a lot of questions related to “what to expect on your order date”. On your install date if we can safely place a temporary line (drop) to your house, meaning we do not have to cross the road or a driveway, we can install service immediately. If a temporary drop would cross a road or driveway we need to get the line buried before we can install service. This process can take 5-10 business days as we have to place a ticket with 811 to have utilities marked before we can safely dig, and that process takes 4 business days. We are working to get the 811 tickets entered before your install date, and we’ve brought in additional crews to get the lines buried as quickly as possible, but if you see where the newest box near your house is across the road (or neighbor’s driveway) we may not be able to install service on your install date. Also, if your house is more than 650 feet from the closest terminal one of our engineers will contact you to discuss charges for the long drop.

We look forward to serving the residents of Albemarle County with CenturyLink Fiber internet.

If you experience any issues with this process, please contact us with details and we will investigate and respond quickly to your inquiry.

Derek Kelly CenturyLink Government Affairs [derek.kelly@lumen.com](mailto:derek.kelly@lumen.com)

### **ABBA Public Meetings**

ABBA was represented in numerous public meetings during the quarter. Representatives were present at the announcement of the rural fiber partnership between CVEC/CVSI Firefly Broadband, Dominion, and Rappahannock Electric Co-operative. The ABBA chair also attended a fiber broadband roundtable with Senator Mark Warner.



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Because of the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic and the limitations on group gatherings imposed by the Governor’s Executive Orders, ABBA meetings during this reporting quarter were held by electronic communication means on either the Zoom platform or Teams platform. Authorized by the County’s April 15th and June 17th Continuity of Government Ordinances, the ABBA Resolution of April 22nd, and the Virginia statute signed into law on April 24th permitting ABBA to meet electronically to discuss and transact business necessary to continue its operations.

The public had real time audio-visual access to the January, February, and March ABBA public meetings over Zoom and real time audio access over telephone, both as provided in the lawfully posted meeting notice. The public is always invited to send questions, comments, and suggestions to ABBA through the County’s Information Technology email [broadband@albemarle.org](mailto:broadband@albemarle.org) . All public meetings held this quarter were recorded and are available for viewing thru links on the County’s website. ABBA meetings are experiencing higher public attendance since the start of the virtual meetings; many public comments expressing concern over the need for broadband during the pandemic.

As part of the ABBA meetings, the ABBA Board discussed additional funding needs and suggested a proposal for additional funds to be added to the Board of Supervisors’ agenda. The ABBA funding request was approved. \$3mil in funding will be available for ABBA use as match grant or for use in direct funded projects. As of the date of this report, the \$3mil in additional funding is yet to be appropriated.

The most recent budget update is included in this report as *Appendix A – ABBA Summary Budget Report*.

ABBA also discussed supporting the BOS goals of supporting programs to make broadband more affordable and the budgeting required to sustain it. In addition, ABBA showed support for the creation of a Broadband Office as part of local government operations.

### **Plans for Next Quarter**

ABBA is beginning work on VATI 2022. There will be public input sessions and meetings with ISPs with applications due September 14, 2021. Work continues on VATI 2020 and VATI 2021. ABBA will support the Broadband Office and the Broadband affordability efforts as they roll out.

ABBA continues to research, monitor, and track the deployment of FirstNet (the US wide public safety network), 5G, and SpaceX’s low earth orbit satellite efforts.

ABBA will continue work to identify ISPs willing to partner to address the unserved areas of Albemarle County. The ABBA mapping and data collection tool is frequently used and continues to help ABBA pinpoint unserved areas. Since the pandemic, 550+ unique reports were entered into the system. Many of these reports contain detailed explanations of the issues caused through not having adequate broadband.



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**Appendix A – ABBA Summary Budget Report**

					Update: 3/16/2021
<b>4-4300-91097-491097-950030-9999 (EXPENSE CODE)</b>					
<b>BROADBAND INCENTIVES</b>					
	<b>Fund Balance</b>	<b>Commitment/ Projected Expenses</b>	<b>Paid Expenses</b>	<b>Remaining Project Funds</b>	
Initial FY21 Balance (includes deposit of VATI 2019 award and reappropriation of unspent FY20 funds to FY21)	\$1,306,415.16				
VATI 2019 Project at Midway Commitment (PO 2021-7298 CVEC)		\$0.00	\$373,248.00	\$0.00	PROJECT CLOSED OUT AND PAYMENT MADE
	\$933,167.16				
VATI 2020 Project at 8 locations Commitment (PO 2021-7747 CenturyLink)		\$291,300.00	\$0.00	\$291,300.00	*CenturyLink prerogative to bill quarterly or in one single invoice
	\$641,867.16				
VATI 2021 Project _____ Commitment (offered state funds, with CenturyLink)		\$640,000.00	\$0.00		DHCD Grant: \$2,276,110.00
	\$1,867.16	\$931,300.00	\$373,248.00	\$1,867.16	
Appropriation of \$3,715.00 PT Wages and \$285.00 FICA moved to 950030 Broadband Incentives on 11/4/2020.					

*End of Report*