



Albemarle Broadband Authority “ABBA”
Formed by the County of Albemarle, VA Board of Supervisors

Broadband Status Report
4th Quarter CY2020

December 30, 2020

The Albemarle Broadband Authority (ABBA) reviewed and is submitting the Broadband Status Report for fourth quarter calendar year 2020 (October 1, 2020 through December 30, 2020). 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. ABBA is adding a new section to the report, “*From the Chair*”. *From the Chair* adds a brief statement from the ABBA Chair either highlighting completed work during the past quarter or planned work for the coming quarter or both. Here is this quarter’s *From the Chair*:

ABBA will have 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. 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. 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

The highlight of this report is the County and ABBA collaboration for CARES related Broadband Activities during the fourth quarter of calendar year 2020. These activities are described in *Table 1 - CARES or CRF Initiated Broadband Related Projects in Albemarle County Summary*.

CARES or CRF Initiated Broadband Related Projects in Albemarle County Summary			
Project / Benefit	Funding Source	CARES/ CRF Amount	Scope
Shentel BEAM / This project while initially targeting 500+ ABBA identified unserved locations; the total count of serviceable locations will exceed 2,000.	51% vendor, 49% local CRF	\$697,194	BEAM is a fixed wireless service and Shentel is prioritizing the 500+ ABBA identified unserved locations with a series of direct mailings; 6 of the 6 sites are now online. https://iwantbeam.com includes a descriptive video explaining the benefits of using fully licensed spectrum for fixed wireless deployments. Pricing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Download speeds up to 25 Mbps for \$60 per month b. Up to 50 Mbps for \$80 per month. c. Up to 100 Mbps for \$160 per month. These offerings are dependent on how close the location is to a serving tower site.



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Project / Benefit	Funding Source	CARES/ CRF Amount	Scope
<p>Firefly Burchs Creek</p> <p>This project was scoped to include additional locations but scaled back due to CARES deadlines.</p>	<p>13% vendor, 87% State CARES</p>	<p>\$230,245</p>	<p>In summary, up to 62 locations served through a fiber broadband extended project adding to our VATI funded Midway project. Corner of Midway Road up Burchs Creek Road and the neighborhoods off Burchs Creek Road are offered fiber service (https://www.fireflyva.com) (up to 1Gbps down/1Gbps up ~\$80 per month) with the basic service of 100Mbps down/100Mbps up at ~\$50 per month. This project is providing service.</p>
<p>Nelson Cable /</p> <p>This project was also subject to CARES deadlines or otherwise may have included more locations.</p>	<p>18% vendor, 72% local funding</p>	<p>\$32,500; this project is now funded through the CARES Supplemental Funding and not subject to CARES or CRF Deadline.</p>	<p>This project is a fiber to the premise project. It is utilizing easements Nelson Cable has with Appalachian Power Company in and around Scottsville. This is Phase 1 of a fiber build and will offer fiber service to up to 27 locations including 2 public safety facilities. Nelson Cable already has all equipment procured for the project and is beginning construction.</p> <p>From their website Nelson Cable will offer the following speeds Mbps down/Mbps up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. 25/25: \$9.95 per month – available to qualifying households with school age children b. 50/50: \$39.99 per month c. 100/100: \$48.99 per month d. 500/500: \$63.99 per month e. 1,000/1,000: \$78.99 per month

Table 1 - CARES or CRF Initiated Broadband Related Projects in Albemarle County Summary

Virginia Telecommunication Initiative (VATI) 2020 Update

In addition to the efforts to manage the CARES related broadband projects; ABBA continued work on other projects this quarter. One project is the continued monitoring of the VATI 2020 Project with CenturyLink as ISP.

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. Several of the eight subprojects are in process of taking pre-orders; during November and December many citizens reported seeing construction of the necessary fiber lines. Direct connections to homes will be coming in early 2021. The project is scheduled to be complete by March 5, 2021.



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Virginia Telecommunication Initiative (VATI) 2021 Update *Award Announcements Delayed*

During this quarter, significant changes occurred regarding the ABBA and CenturyLink application for VATI 2021 Grant Funds. The application was submitted on time, accepted, and is under review:

<https://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/sites/default/files/Docx/vati/2021/applications/abba-application.pdf>

This application, since the last report, was rescoped to eliminate the Boonesville area since a portion of the area is now scheduled to be served by CVEC / Firefly. Additionally, in December ABBA was notified that yet another rescoping may be required. This additional rescoping is due to the federal government announcing upcoming awards of broadband grants which may include funding for portions of one or more of the project areas included in the application. This statewide process of evaluating the impact of the upcoming federal funding is delaying most VATI 2021 announcements. Many of the announcements are now expected after January 2021. As of the date of this report ABBA has not yet heard whether the application will require rescoping. Therefore, ABBA does not yet know if the VATI 2021 award determination will be announced in January 2021.

If the VATI 2021 application is awarded without additional rescoping, the project is estimated to offer fiber broadband service for **2,076** locations in Albemarle County. In size, scope, and funding; this is the largest application for state funds submitted by Albemarle County or ABBA. More information about this application and the other VATI funded projects in Albemarle County are included in *Appendix A – VATI Funded Projects in Albemarle County*.

ABBA Public Meetings

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 October and November 2020 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 . 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.

New for this quarter is that ABBA is providing a monthly budget update at its meetings. The most recent budget update is included in this report as *Appendix B – ABBA Summary Budget Report*.

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Plans for Next Quarter

ABBA and CenturyLink continue to work on ways to improve response to resident concerns over existing phone and DSL service. Several of the reports from the last quarter were addressed expeditiously; others were not. The process continues to improve.

ABBA continues to improve mapping capability and by the end of the first quarter of calendar year 2021 will have a public accessibility mapping utility. Figure 1 Prototype Albemarle County Broadband Lookup provides a glimpse of what is coming.

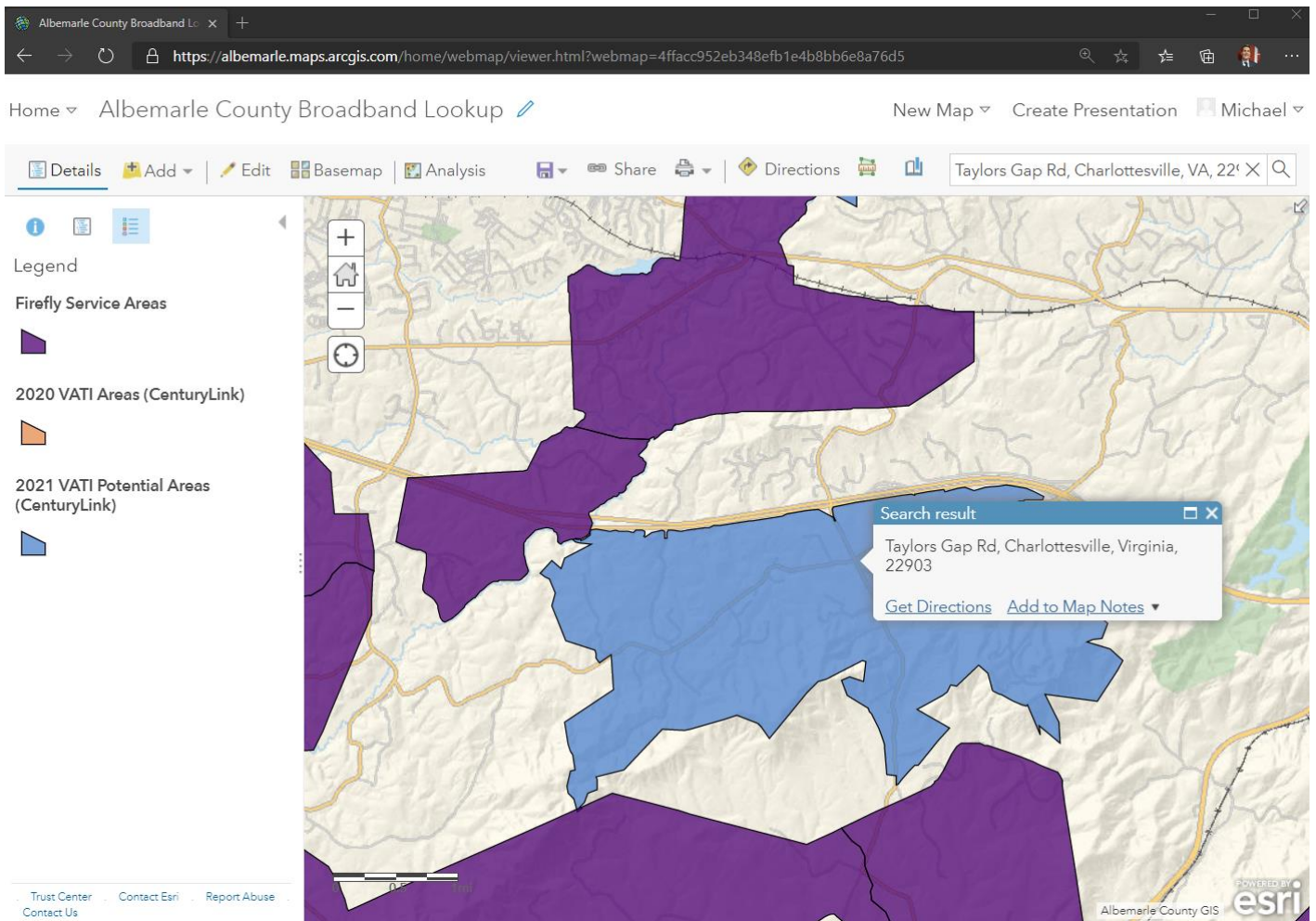


Figure 1 Prototype Albemarle County Broadband Lookup

ABBA is also tracking progress toward our goal of affordable and accessible broadband for all locations in the County. A table of connections made, connections scheduled, and connections pending to be updated and discussed at each ABBA public meeting and summarized in the quarterly report. ABBA would like to say that since the County has started focusing on and investing in Broadband ABBA and its partner ISPs have been able to facilitate 3744 connections and are hopeful that at least another 3731 connections will be facilitated during 2021.



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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.

ABBA is working on a sustaining Broadband Affordability and Accessibility budget request for consideration by the Board of Supervisors. The request, if approved; will come to the Board of Supervisors at a future meeting.



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Appendix A – VATI Funded Projects in Albemarle County

VATI Project	Partner	Technology	VATI Funds	Partner Funds	ABBA/County Funds	Total Project Cost	Servicable Units (SU)	Average cost per SU	VATI % of Project	Partner % of Project	ABBA/County % of Project
Albemarle 2017	CenturyLink	DSL	\$118,400	\$24,600	\$10,000	\$153,000	284	\$539	77.4%	16.1%	6.5%
Albemarle 2018	Comcast	DOCSIS Hybrid Fiber-Coax	\$473,366	\$202,817	\$0	\$676,183	178	\$3,799	70.0%	30.0%	0.0%
Albemarle 2019	CVEC	Fiber to the Home	\$301,748	\$1,081,475	\$71,500	\$1,454,723	341	\$4,266	20.7%	74.3%	4.9%
Abemarle 2020	CenturyLink	Fiber to the Home	\$291,300	\$1,359,400	\$291,300	\$1,942,000	852	\$2,279	15.0%	70.0%	15.0%
Abemarle 2021*	CenturyLink	Fiber to the Home	\$3,358,476	\$1,024,314	\$640,000	\$5,022,790	2076	\$2,419	66.9%	20.4%	12.7%
Totals			\$4,543,290	\$3,692,606	\$1,012,800	\$9,248,696	3731	\$2,479	49.1%	39.9%	11.0%

* The 2018 VATI project with Comcast was delivered under budget resulting in the return of \$142,106 to VATI.

** The 2021 VATI project with CenturyLink is in the under review phase; awards will not be known until January 2021 at the earliest.



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Appendix B – ABBA Summary Budget Report

					Update: 12/14/2020
4-4300-91097-491097-950030-9999 (EXPENSE CODE)					
BROADBAND INCENTIVES					
	Fund Balance	Commitment/ Projected Expenses	Paid Expenses	Remaining Project Funds	
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 (not yet awarded, with CenturyLink)		\$640,000.00	\$0.00		
	\$1,867.16	\$931,300.00	\$373,248.00	\$1,867.16	

End of Report