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Grant Award to Connect 12,000 Unserved in Pittsylvania County

Pittsylvania County, RiverStreet Networks awarded \$39.5 million for fiber-to-the-home network; 12,000 unserved locations to be reached in 3 years

The Pittsylvania County–RiverStreet Networks partnership to bring fiber-to-the-home internet to every unserved home in the County got a boost with the announcement of a significant grant award. As part of a larger, multi-locality project, Pittsylvania County and RiverStreet Networks have been awarded approximately \$39.5 million from the Virginia Telecommunication Initiative (VATI) for internet expansion. Along with investments from RiverStreet, Pittsylvania County, and Pittsylvania County Schools, these funds are facilitating the deployment of a \$75 million fiber-to-the-home network that is expected to reach 12,000+ unserved locations, as defined by the Federal Communications Commission, within three years.

“This grant award is a major milestone in meeting our commitment to bring reliable and affordable internet access to unserved households in Pittsylvania County,” said **Bob Warren, Chairman of the Pittsylvania County Board of Supervisors**. “The Board of Supervisors understands the important role that internet access plays in our world today, so we are absolutely thrilled that this joint project with RiverStreet Networks and Pittsylvania County Schools is coming to fruition. We are grateful that the Virginia Telecommunication Initiative (VATI) is helping us reach almost 12,000 unserved locations in our County with quality internet coverage. We will continue to leverage funding and make strategic investments until every County resident has internet access.”

“We are excited about this opportunity for the students of Pittsylvania County,” said **Sam Burton, Chairman of the Pittsylvania County School Board**. “This grant funding, combined with the commitment from the School Board and the County, will provide our students with the



much-needed technology and internet connections to further expand the opportunities for educational success. This is a great day for the students of Pittsylvania County Schools!”

“Our reliable infrastructure solutions have helped the communities we serve prepare for today’s demand for high-speed internet for remote learning, virtual meetings and much more,” states **Eric Cramer, RiverStreet Networks President/CEO**. “RiverStreet Networks is proud and pleased to be working on this project with Pittsylvania County. We are all connected by the internet.”

Pittsylvania County, Pittsylvania County Schools, and RiverStreet Networks [signed a memorandum of understanding](#) in September, jointly committing to leverage all possible funding opportunities to continue expanding fiber across Pittsylvania County. For the first phase of this project, Pittsylvania County and the Pittsylvania County Schools committed a combined \$16.5 million to the effort, which RiverStreet Networks matched with \$19.6 million. The remainder of the funding, \$39.5 million, will come from the VATI grant. The award is part of more than \$722 million that was allocated to 35 projects across the Commonwealth through the Virginia Telecommunications Initiative.

The \$39.5 million award is part of a larger, \$87 million VATI grant for RiverStreet Networks and the West Piedmont Planning District Commission, which includes several other rural Virginia counties. The Department of Housing and Community Development administers the VATI program, which provides financial assistance to extend broadband service to unserved areas.

This partnership between Pittsylvania County, Pittsylvania County Schools, and RiverStreet represents a major shift in the way that the Board of Supervisors is working to tackle a lack of internet access, one of the biggest problems facing Pittsylvania County. As part of a strategic plan adopted in 2019, the Board of Supervisors set a goal that at least 90% of county residents have broadband access by 2024.

Pittsylvania County and Pittsylvania County Schools are both contributing a significant portion of the funds received from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to this project. From ARPA, Pittsylvania County is investing \$6.5 million, and Pittsylvania County Schools is contributing \$5.5 million. The remaining \$4.5 million will be covered through a revenue-sharing agreement with RiverStreet Networks. All of the funds generated through this agreement will be re-invested into additional broadband construction efforts.

RiverStreet Networks is an award-winning communications technology company headquartered in Wilkesboro, NC. For 70 years, RiverStreet Networks has played an active role in providing telecommunication services and connecting communities with broadband service. RiverStreet Networks is focused on delivering the latest and best technology to



unserved rural areas. Service is provided in areas of North Carolina and Virginia with excellent telephone, internet, video, security systems and business solutions.

While there are a few other internet providers in Pittsylvania County, none have demonstrated a commitment to leveraging available funding opportunities to reach those who are currently unserved. RiverStreet Networks is built on a mission of using creative means to provide internet in rural areas that are simply not cost-effective markets for companies focused on profits. This project specifically targets those that do not have broadband access at this time.

As defined by the FCC, broadband access means download speeds of at least 25 megabits per second and upload speeds of 3 megabits per second. This is often referred to as speeds of 25/3. While this is the bare minimum speed for broadband, the majority of customers on RiverStreet's Network are expected to have speeds that significantly exceed the broadband threshold, with the majority of them having speeds of 100/100.

Now that the award has been announced, RiverStreet Networks is expected to begin ordering the fiber-optic cable and moving forward with the network development. Those who are interested in RiverStreet Networks service can submit their information [on this page](#), where additional updates, including coverage maps and timelines, are expected to be posted in the coming weeks and months.

While this project represents an unprecedented investment in expanding internet access, this does not represent the end of Pittsylvania County's involvement. Pittsylvania County and RiverStreet are already pursuing additional funding opportunities and grants to expand the scope of the fiber-to-the-home network across the County.