

Albemarle  
Broadband  
Authority

# Broadband Status Report

## 1st Quarter CY2024

December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024

The Albemarle Broadband Authority (ABBA) reviewed and is submitting the Broadband Status Report for the third quarter of calendar year 2024 (October 1, 2024 through December 31, 2024). 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 and the Broadband Accessibility and Affordability Office (BAAO). Here is this quarter's *From the Chair*:

### *Note from the Chairman - Q4-2024*

*The Albemarle Broadband Authority met twice this quarter, on October 23 and an adjusted-for-the-holidays-schedule meeting on December 10. We received progress reports from the VATI 2022 project, Firefly's RISE, indicating that work is moving on plan or close to plan on most fronts. Firefly is scheduled to make thousands of fiber to the home connections in 2025, and for many, this opportunity will be transforming.*

*We are continuing to work with Brightspeed to collect the billing details that will enable us to close out the VATI 2021 project – they will not be paid until the details are provided. This is inching closer to completion and I am optimistic it will get done in Q1 of 2025.*

*It is with mixed emotions that the Authority took note of the retirement of Mike Culp at the December meeting, proclaiming him in his role as "The Man Who Brought Broadband to Albemarle". Mike's involvement with bringing Internet services and now broadband services to the county has been instrumental in placing us where we are today. He leaves a good team behind him, but he will be missed.*

*Bucky Walsh  
ABBA Chair*



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### **Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) Funding**

DHCD has begun its process for distributing the \$1.48 billion in BEAD funding the Commonwealth received. The primary purpose of the funding is to expand broadband service to unserved and underserved areas, towards the goal of universal broadband service. Historic investments in broadband funding by past administrations allow DHCD to plan for additional uses of these funds.

Unlike prior DHCD-led programs, including those involving federal moneys, the providers will be the applicants for BEAD funding, rather than localities. The primary role localities play is in providing letters of support that can represent as much as 10% of an applications score.

BAAO staff has begun the process of having ABBA empowered by the Board of Supervisors to issue these letters on behalf of the County. The question will be put before the Board during a public hearing on the matter to be held on January 15<sup>th</sup>.

If so empowered, staff will receive and assess requests for letters of support based on ABBA guidance, and then present those requests at a subsequent meeting, regular or special, for Authority action. Staff presented two priorities for consideration of BEAD letters of support:

- 1) That applicants plan to complete work in Albemarle by the end of 2026
- 2) That applications reflect the eligible locations identified by staff

Errors in mapping resulted in more than 1,000 served locations being listed as unserved or underserved. Staff analysis shows just 328 total locations unserved.

The application window is open and will close approximately 60 days after NTIA accepts the challenge process that concluded at the end of 2023.



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### Virginia Telecommunication Initiative (VATI) 2022 Update

Make-ready and construction operations continue in the VATI 22 project in partnership with Firefly Fiber Broadband and the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission (TJPDC). This project represents a partnership between Albemarle’s four power providers to leverage utility infrastructure to deploy a fiber network that spans 13 counties.

Albemarle County	
Appalachian Power - Red Hill	In-Service
CARES - Albemarle	In-Service
REC - Stanardsville (Dyke)	Connecting Now
RISE (Beaver Dam Rd)	Winter 2024-2025
RISE (Decca Ln)	Winter 2024-2025
RISE (Ivy Farms)	Winter 2024-2025
RISE (St. John Rd)	Winter 2024-2025
RISE (Thurston)	Winter 2024-2025
RISE (Batesville)	Spring 2025
RISE (Free Union/Earlsville/Waverly)	Spring 2025
RISE (Rockfish Gap)	Spring 2025
RISE (Sugar Hollow)	Spring 2025
RISE (Windrift)	Spring 2025
Appalachian Power - Keene	Summer 2025
REC - Preddy Creek (Advance Mills)	Summer 2025
REC - Preddy Creek (Burnley)	Summer 2025
REC - Preddy Creek (Vineyard Rd)	Summer 2025
RISE (Carters Mtn)	Summer 2025
RISE (Gordonsville Rd)	Summer 2025
RISE (Louisa Rd)	Summer 2025
RISE (Ragged Mtn)	Summer 2025
RISE (Stony Point/Eastham)	Summer 2025
RISE (Turkey Sag)	TBD

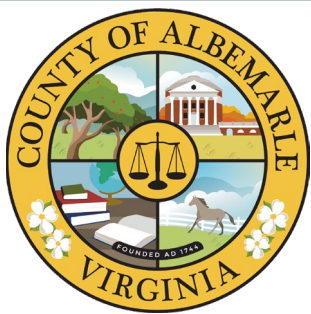
Construction timelines for several areas have slipped to Winter 2024 – 2025. Additional project areas remain on schedule.

Fiber design has crossed the half-way mark, while make-ready continues to advance. The number of passings continues to sit below 1,000, however several project areas will soon begin connections. Nearly all project areas have a scheduled completion date.

Several project areas have been hampered by difficulties obtaining easements along private

VATI 2022 Project Milestones	Progress as of February 2024	Progress as of September 2024	Progress as of October 2024	Progress as of November 2024	% Increase since last ABBA Update
Miles of Field Data Collection	104	431	430	430	0%
Miles of Fiber Design	96	202	252	252	20%
Miles of Make Ready Construction	87	89	89	92	3%
Miles of Aerial Fiber Placement	75	82	82	82	0%
Miles of Underground Fiber Placement	11	12	12	12	0%
Miles of Splicing	66	95	94	94	-1%
Number of Passings	830	921	938	938	2%





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

Brightspeed has submitted financial documentation towards reimbursement requests for this project which delivered 1,430 passings in Albemarle County. The documentation has been reviewed by staff and deemed sufficient for reimbursement. BAAO staff is working to remit payment of ABBA's portion of the project, (\$560,141) while working with DHCD towards reimbursement for the remaining funding.

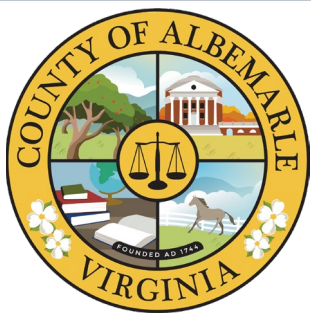
Brightspeed also submitted close-out documentation which was submitted to DHCD on December 3<sup>rd</sup>. Concerns have arisen that the documentation provided is insufficient for final financial review and discussions are expected to continue into the new year.

Concerns regarding the installation of services to customers have been a recurring matter. VATI 2021 customers, including one Authority member, have voiced complaints regarding how service lines were installed, including lines improperly buried, lines draped across trees and fence lines, and lines left on driveways. After another such call, Brightspeed has expressed a willingness to conduct a survey of all VATI 2021 installations to identify deficiencies proactively rather than waiting until customers voice complaints. Staff will report on progress with this survey.

### **ABBA Public Meetings**

The public had in-person and real time audio-visual access to ABBA regular meetings at the County Office Building and over Zoom and real time audio access over telephone on October 23<sup>rd</sup> and December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2024. The November and December meetings were consolidated due to the Thanksgiving and Christmas Holidays.

ABBA welcomed public comment at its meetings and invites the public to send questions, comments, and suggestions through email at [broadband@albemarle.org](mailto:broadband@albemarle.org). All public meetings held this quarter were recorded and are available for viewing through links on the County's website.



## Albemarle Broadband Authority

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At the December meeting, the Authority passed a proclamation honoring the leadership and contributions of former member and then-current Chief Administrative Officer Michael Culp. For his dedication to bringing broadband access to all of Albemarle County's rural areas, Mr. Culp was presented with a plaque.

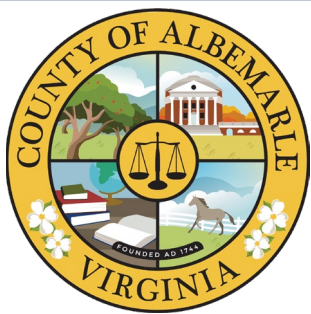
These honors were bestowed on the occasion of Mr. Culp's pending retirement. Following the presentation and adoption of the proclamation, Mr. Culp presented his resignation as Chief Administrative Officer, and BAAO Program Manager Jason Inofuentes was nominated and selected to serve as Chief Administrative Officer.

### **BAAO Updates**

The BAAO continues to operate its Digital Navigator program and its affordable broadband benefit, the AC Bridge. Both programs have seen steady growth, and clients are being served in-person at the Central and Northside branches of the Jefferson-Madison Regional Library and digitally or by-phone.

Analysis of DHCD's list of locations eligible for Broadband Equity Access and Deployment funding was completed by staff. DHCD's list included 1,481 passings believed to be underserved or unserved; staff analysis narrowed that figure to just 328 locations. The bulk of the disparity came from areas served by Comcast and areas served by or under enforceable commitments to be served by Firefly. Additional locations were identified as served by other providers and locations that are erroneously reported and broadband serviceable locations.

Staff presented these findings and recommended actions at the December meeting, as discussed above.



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### Appendix A – ABBA Summary Budget Report

Update: 12/03/2024

**4-4300-91097-491097-950030-9999 (EXPENSE CODE)**

### BROADBAND INCENTIVES>ALBEMARLE BROADBAND AUTHORITY

	Original budget	Encumbrances	Expenditures	Balance
VATI 22	\$4,500,000.00	\$ 2,957,462.49	\$1,455,537.51	
VATI 21	\$2,916,110.00	\$2,916,110.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$7,416,110.00</b>	<b>\$5,873,572.49</b>	<b>\$1,455,537.51</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>

**Notes:**

BAAO, OGA, & DHCD met with Brightspeed 9/17/2024. DHCD, BAAO, and Brightspeed conducted a site visit on Gilbert Station Road 10/8/2024. Brightspeed provided DHCD access to confidential detail data supporting all project costs. BAAO, OGA, and DHCD will review while Brightspeed prepares one or more invoices for reimbursement and finalizes fiber subscriber counts and begins the efforts to document speed tests. As of 12/03/2024 Brightspeed is preparing Invoices for BAAO review.

**VATI 2022** Expenditures include payment of 13 invoices to TJPDC totaling \$1,368,537.51 and the transfer of \$87,000 to the ARPA Grant Project (BAAO)



## **ALBEMARLE BROADBAND AUTHORITY**

### **RESOLUTION TO RECOGNIZE THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF MICHAEL J. CULP**

**WHEREAS**, Michael J. Culp served as an original member of the Albemarle Broadband Authority (ABBA) Board of Directors from 2017 until 2019.

**WHEREAS**, Michael J. Culp became the Chief Administrator for ABBA in 2019 and has served honorably, diligently, and continuously since his appointment.

**WHEREAS**, Michael J. Culp currently serves as the Director of the Broadband Accessibility and Affordability Office for Albemarle County Virginia, since that office's inception and sits on Governor Glenn Youngkin's Broadband Advisory Council.

**WHEREAS**, prior to him directing the Broadband Accessibility and Affordability Office, Michael J. Culp served for 18 years as the IT Director for Albemarle County during which time he came to focus on achieving universal access to broadband communication technologies for the entire Albemarle County community.

**WHEREAS**, Michael J. Culp is a longtime resident of Albemarle County's rural areas, which has given him a first-hand appreciation of the need for access to broadband throughout Albemarle County.

**WHEREAS**, for his expert and critical service to this Authority and the Albemarle County community at large, Michael J. Culp is deserving of commendation, recognition, and gratitude.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED ON THIS 10<sup>th</sup> DAY OF DECEMBER, 2024**, that the Albemarle Broadband Authority hereby Proclaims the following:

**The Albemarle Broadband Authority**, in recognition of the outstanding commitment he has made for the last decade to bring high speed Internet broadband services to all the citizens of Albemarle County, Virginia, hereby proclaims and designates **Mike Culp** as: **The Man Who Brought Broadband to Albemarle**.

In gratitude for his dedication, leadership and vision, this proclamation is made on this 10<sup>th</sup> day of December, Two Thousand Twenty-Four.

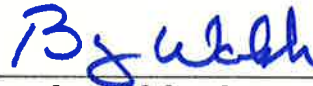
In witness whereof, we the members of the Albemarle Broadband Authority have caused our following names to be inscribed upon a plaque honoring Mike Culp accordingly: Jim Andrews, Bill Fritz, Trevor Henry, Waldo Jaquith, Mike Pruitt, Bucky Walsh.

**MOTION**

I move the Board to adopt this Resolution recognizing Mike Culp for his significant service to this Authority and to the County of Albemarle, Virginia, and authorize the procurement and presentation of a plaque to Mike Culp proclaiming the same.

\*\*\*\*

I, Bucky Walsh, do hereby certify that the foregoing writing is a true and correct copy of a Resolution duly adopted by the Albemarle County Broadband Authority by a vote of 6 to 0 as recorded below, at a meeting held on December 10, 2024.



\_\_\_\_\_  
Bucky Walsh, Chair  
Albemarle Broadband Authority

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Dir. Walsh	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dir. Jaquith	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dir. Henry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dir. Fritz	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dir. Pruitt	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dir. Andrews	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>