



# Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission Signs Contract with Department of Housing and Community Development, Launching a \$288M Project to Build Fiber Internet to More Than 36,000 Homes and Businesses

August 24, 2022

**Charlottesville, Virginia** — The Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission (TJPDC) announced that they officially signed a contract with the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), launching a \$288 million fiber internet construction project that will provide access to affordable, reliable high speed fiber internet to more than 36,000 businesses and residences. In December 2021, Governor Ralph Northam announced the award of a \$79 million in Virginia Telecommunications Initiative grant to Firefly Fiber Broadband<sup>SM</sup>, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Central Virginia Electric Cooperative, and its partners Rappahannock Electric Cooperative (REC) and Dominion Energy. This project was funded/supported in collaboration with the Commonwealth of Virginia's Telecommunication Initiative (VATI); the \$79 million VATI grant from the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, along with \$209 million in local and private sector matching funds, support the project.

The TJPDC is the administrator for a 2022 VATI grant that will facilitate rural broadband expansion across a 13-county area, including the five counties that are part of the TJPDC region. Administered by the DHCD, VATI provides targeted financial assistance to extend broadband service to areas that are unserved by an internet service provider. "We are thankful for our partnership with Firefly and DHCD to get this project up and running," said TJPDC Executive Director Christine Jacobs. "We are especially excited to see expansion of high-speed fiber internet become a reality across our greater region." Projects were selected through a competitive process that evaluated each project for demonstrated need and benefit for the community, applicant readiness and capacity, and the cost and leverage of the proposed project. The level of funding awarded is based on the infrastructure needs in the project area.

As part of Firefly's Regional Internet Service Expansion (RISE) program, residents in Albemarle, Amherst, Appomattox, Buckingham, Campbell, Cumberland, Fluvanna, Goochland, Greene, Louisa, Madison, Nelson, and Powhatan counties will have the opportunity to connect to fiber-to-the-home, gigabit speed internet over the course



of the next three years. Firefly President and CEO Gary Wood says, "Firefly is very fortunate to have reliable partners in this endeavor, including our engineering and construction contractors, and leadership in each county. The RISE project intends to offer universal broadband access to all unserved locations in central Virginia and would not be possible without the cooperation of our utility partners REC and Dominion Energy."

Rappahannock Electric Cooperative will own the fiber network where it delivers electricity in the counties of Louisa, Albemarle, Goochland, and Greene counties. Firefly will serve as the internet service provider.

Dominion Energy is installing fiber in rural areas as it moves forward with efforts to transform Virginia's energy grid. This fiber capacity can be used for operational needs as well as broadband access, reducing broadband deployment costs for internet service providers. Under the agreement, Firefly will lease the "middle-mile" fiber installed by Dominion Energy in the company's electric service area in the counties of Albemarle, Appomattox, Buckingham, Cumberland, Fluvanna, Goochland, Greene, Louisa, and Powhatan.

The signed contract marks the official start of the project but design and pre-construction tasks, as permitted by the DHCD, have been underway. Regular updates about the status of the project will be communicated through the [Firefly website \(www.fireflyva.com\)](http://www.fireflyva.com), as well as correspondence from the TJPDC and Firefly.

###

#### **About Firefly Fiber Broadband**

Headquartered in Palmyra, VA, Firefly Fiber Broadband<sup>SM</sup> is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Central Virginia Electric Cooperative. Firefly offers lightning-fast internet via fiber to the premise that is reliable and priced fairly with no hidden equipment costs or special introductory pricing that increases the base cost of phone or internet later. Firefly has no contracts, no data caps, or slowdowns, and offers symmetrical upload and download speeds. Firefly Light offers 100 Mbps for \$49.99; Firefly Flash offers 1 Gbps for \$79.99, and Firefly Voice is \$34.99 with a \$5.00 discount when bundled with the internet. For more information, visit [www.fireflyva.com](http://www.fireflyva.com).

#### **About Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission**

The Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission (TJPDC) is a regional planning agency that offers a broad range of services in the areas of land-use planning and community development; transportation, environmental, and housing planning; economic development; and legislative services. The TJPDC serves its member governments, which include the City of Charlottesville and the Counties of Albemarle, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa, and Nelson.

#### **Press Inquiries:**

Melissa Gay, 434-263-7638 ([mgay@mycvec.com](mailto:mgay@mycvec.com))

Lori Allshouse, 434-953-8688 ([lallshouse@tjpd.org](mailto:lallshouse@tjpd.org))



Firefly installer operates a bucket truck in rural Nelson County. Photo credit: Firefly Fiber Broadband<sup>SM</sup>