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**THE THOMAS JEFFERSON PLANNING DISTRICT COMMISSION  
ANNOUNCES \$79 MILLION GRANT FROM VIRGINIA TELECOMMUNICATION INITIATIVE (VATI)  
TO FACILITATE UNIVERSAL BROADBAND SERVICE IN 13 CENTRAL VIRGINIA COUNTIES**

*Charlottesville, Virginia, December 13, 2021* – The Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission (TJPDC) is the recipient of a \$79 million Virginia Telecommunication Initiative (VATI) grant announced today by Governor Ralph Northam. The TJPDC was the lead applicant for the Regional Internet Service Expansion (RISE) project, a partnership between Central Virginia Electric Cooperative, and its subsidiary, Firefly Fiber Broadband; Rappahannock Electric Cooperative; and Dominion Energy. The TJPDC will serve as the grant administrator for the project.

The VATI grant will support the \$288 million project which endeavors to offer universal access to gigabit speed broadband service for 36,000 unserved homes and businesses in 13 counties in Central Virginia. Elected officials from each county in the project voted to contribute funds totaling \$33.5 million toward the project. Fiber construction will take approximately three years to complete and will include nearly 5,000 miles of fiber.

“The TJPDC is proud to serve as the lead applicant and grant administrator for this super-regional project, covering 13 counties and touching five different planning districts,” said Christine Jacobs, TJPDC Executive Director. “We are grateful for the incredible partnerships that have formed to overcome obstacles to securing universal broadband coverage in our region and look forward to supporting the provision of high-speed fiber internet across the project area.”

The counties included in the project area include Albemarle, Amherst, Appomattox, Buckingham, Campbell, Cumberland, Fluvanna, Goochland, Greene, Louisa, Madison, Nelson and Powhatan. Those localities fall within five different planning district commission regions across a large swath of Central Virginia, making this truly a “super-regional” project.

Today’s announcement by the governor at the Goochland Fire and Rescue Station 6 was made to a gathering of local and state elected officials, first responders, locality staff, and business partners. Virginia U.S. Senators Mark Warner and Tim Kaine, along with Congresswoman Abigail Spanberger, also participated in the presentation.

Administered by the Department of Housing and Community Development, VATI provides targeted financial assistance to extend broadband service to areas that are unserved by an internet service provider. For this FY22 grant round, about \$750 million in federal and state funding was available for 57 applications that requested \$943 million.

**About the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission (TJPDC)**

The TJPDC is a regional planning agency that offers a broad range of services in the areas of economic development, land-use/planning, community development, environmental, transportation, and housing planning as well as legislative services. The TJPDC serves the member governments within the Planning District, to include, the City of Charlottesville and the Counties of Albemarle, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa, and Nelson. The TJPDC currently houses the region’s Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and coordinates a wide variety of short-range and long-range urban and rural transportation, planning, environment, housing, and community development projects.