



Broadband Initiative Extends Benefits of High-Speed Internet to Unserved Areas in Virginia

With funding support from VATI, Breezeline and local counties partner to bring broadband internet to unserved areas of the Commonwealth

RICHMOND, Va., April 17, 2023 – [Breezeline](#), the nation’s eighth-largest cable operator, joined representatives of Mathews, Caroline, Middlesex and Lancaster Counties today for a special event marking the completion of a new \$7.2 million, 150-mile fiber-broadband network that brings high-speed connectivity to more than 1,400 homes and businesses in Mathews, Caroline, Lancaster and Middlesex counties.

The “Connecting Virginia” event was held at the headquarters of the VCTA-Broadband Association on East Main Street in Richmond.

Tamarah Holmes, Ph.D., Director of the Office of Broadband and Program Manager of the Virginia Appalachian Regional Commission Program, representatives from the County Broadband Offices, Ray LaMura, President of the VCTA-Broadband Association of Virginia, and Shaun Blake, Breezeline Region Director of Operations, delivered remarks at the event.

“We know that expansion in this state can sometimes be challenging,” said **Dr. Tamarah Holmes**. “The good news is that initiatives like this prove what can be done when providers and communities share cost to reduce risk, while tapping into state and federal funding streams to drive advanced technology deeper and deeper into the Commonwealth. We won’t achieve our goal of universal access overnight, but we are making steady gains each and every year through initiatives like this. So I thank Breezeline and the counties of Mathews, Caroline, Middlesex and Lancaster for this achievement.”

The expansion project was funded through a Virginia Telecommunication Initiative (VATI) grant administered by the Department of Housing and Community Development. Breezeline and the counties also contributed to the cost of the project, whose construction was completed in February.

Judy Rowe, Chair of the Broadband Advisory Board for Mathews County, which submitted the application for the project to VATI with Breezeline on behalf of the four counties, said, “My greatest concern has always been Mathews students whose families urgently needed connectivity during the pandemic. Now thanks to this project, 461 more households have access in Mathews. We are closing the gap. This is one giant step toward universal coverage.”

Chair of the Caroline County Board of Supervisors, **Floyd Thomas**, stressed the importance of residents having access to affordable internet. “Access to broadband is

about more than network reach. Lower-income households must be able to receive the same high speeds that higher-income households receive.”

Thomas cited a 2021 Pew Research Survey that found that while 92% of households earning \$75,000 or more per year have broadband, only 57% of those earning under \$30,000 do, a 35-point difference. “That’s why I applaud Breezeline and other providers who are supporting the Affordable Connectivity Program, known as ACP,” Thomas said. “Through the program, eligible households can receive Breezeline’s 100 Mbps service, with a modem included, at no cost after the program discount is applied.”

“Working with Breezeline, in conjunction with federal and state funding, has made it possible for more Lancaster County homes and businesses to have access to affordable, reliable connectivity. And that’s at speeds that not only exceed the FCC’s broadband specifications, but with the goal of having Gigabit internet speeds available, as a minimum, said **Cassie Thompson**, Chair of the Lancaster County Broadband Authority. “I am convinced that state of the art connectivity will provide crucial access to telemedicine and allow residents to work from home and to learn online. It will also provide essential connectivity for governmental and emergency response teams.”

Executive Director of the Middlesex Broadband Authority, **Kevin Gentry**, cited a Deloitte Study which found that increased broadband penetration leads to stronger economic growth. “It provides access to educational opportunities and it expands the types of jobs available, thereby raising the level of skills in the population. Companies are incentivized to do business in areas where there is state-of-the-art technology available to meet their needs. This contributes to economic growth and revitalization.”

Ray LaMura, President of the VCTA-Broadband Association of Virginia, whose member companies serve more than 2.6 million customers in the Commonwealth, said, “The need to connect continues, and there’s more to be done to reach the unserved areas in our state. Yet, in the midst of that ongoing mission, it is good to pause to recognize successes along the way, and that is why we are excited to be a part of today’s event and we commend Breezeline and its County partners for this initiative.”

ABOUT BREEZELINE

Cogeco US, operating as Breezeline, a subsidiary of Cogeco Communications Inc. (TSX: CCA), is the eighth-largest cable operator in the United States. The company provides its residential and business customers with Internet, TV and Voice services in 13 states: Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Virginia and West Virginia. Cogeco Communications Inc. also operates in Québec and Ontario, in Canada, under the Cogeco Connexion name. Cogeco Inc.’s subsidiary, Cogeco Media, owns and operates 21 radio stations as well as a news agency serving audiences primarily in the province of Québec.