



Rural Broadband Task Force

September 20, 2022

Deborah E. Hall, CPA, Deputy County Administrator

Evelyn Jacobson, Chief Information Officer

Mark Wagner, CEO ThinkBig Networks

Dee Anna Sobczak, CFO ThinkBig Networks

Rural Broadband Task Force

Members

- ▶ Deborah Hall & Erica Rizor, County Administration
- ▶ Evelyn Jacobson, Matt Jacobson & Alexa Steen, IT
- ▶ Renesha Miles, Chief Equity Officer
- ▶ Jeffrey Clements, Department of Emergency Services
- ▶ Michelle DeSoto, Economic Development
- ▶ Gina Markovich, Planning & Growth Management
- ▶ Steve Andritz, Charles County Board of Education
- ▶ Thomas Dennison, SMECO
- ▶ Kevin Warring, District 1 Resident
- ▶ Katie Stickle, District 2 Resident





Rural Broadband Task Force

Agenda

- ▶ Categories & Definitions
- ▶ FY22 Network Infrastructure Grant
 - ▶ North Nanjemoy - ThinkBig
- ▶ NCN Broadband Buildout
 - ▶ Update from ThinkBig Networks
- ▶ NBE-Cat 2 Project Update
- ▶ Introduction - LD-Cat 3
- ▶ Request for Approval
 - ▶ NCN Extension
 - ▶ LD-Cat3

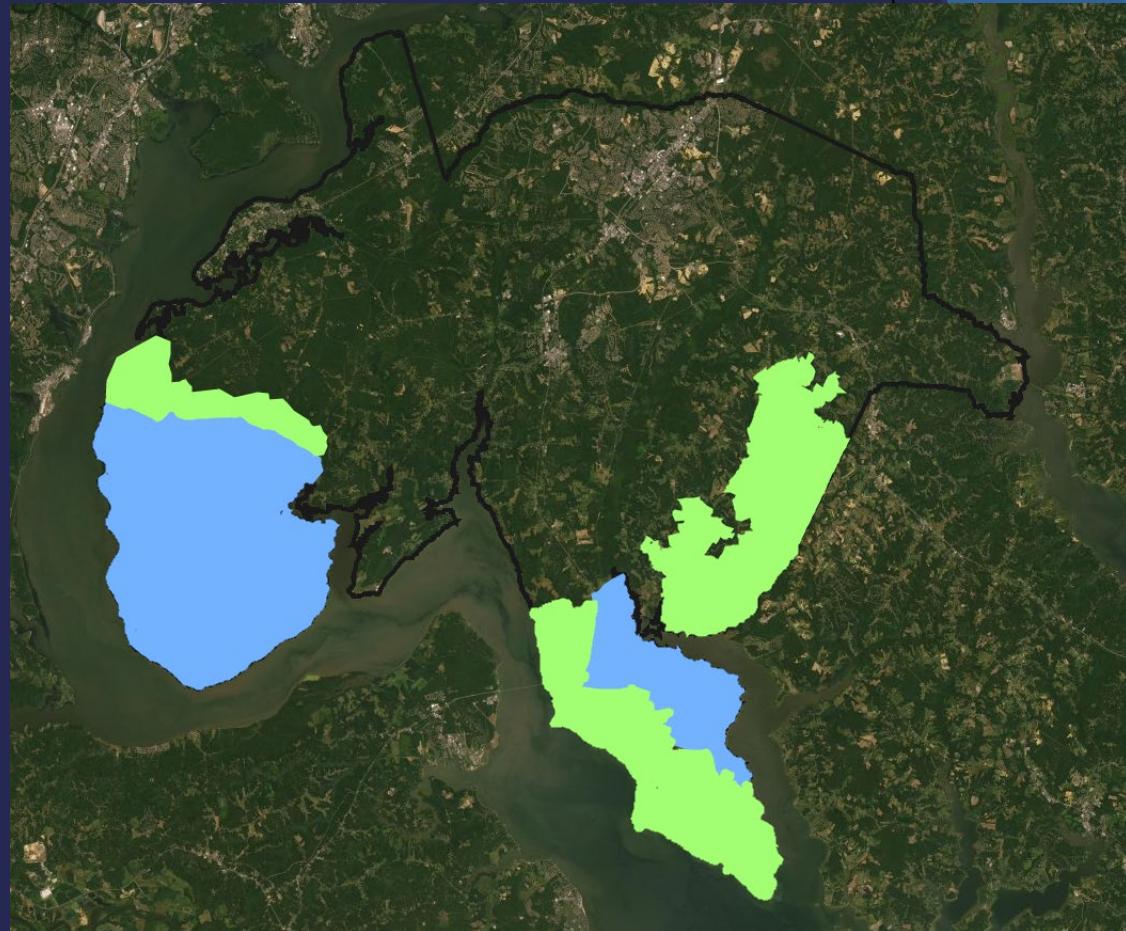
Categories of Unserved

Definitions

- ▶ **Category 1:** Contiguous areas where no infrastructure exists capable of delivering broadband
- ▶ **Category 2:** Isolated pockets and roads that don't have broadband infrastructure that are located within otherwise-served areas
- ▶ **Category 3:** Locations at the end of long setbacks/driveways requiring customers to contribute to the cost of installation of the “service drop”

FY 22 Network Infrastructure Grant Program Update

- ▶ Projects will address Category 1 and Category 2 residents
- ▶ 2 Funded Service Areas (FSAs)
 - ▶ North Nanjemoy (ThinkBig)
 - ▶ Dentsville / Charlotte Hall (Comcast)
- ▶ ISPs are working to finalize their agreements with the State
- ▶ Will be finalizing the County's agreements with each ISP in the coming months



The North Nanjemoy Grant Project

- Brand New Fiber Optic Broadband Grant 2022
- Will bring fiber optic broadband connectivity to up to 350 underserved residents
- Extends the already existing ThinkBig fiber optic infrastructure in Nanjemoy



NCN Broadband Buildout

Project Update

- ▶ This project is addressing our two largest Category 1 areas in the County - Nanjemoy and Cobb Neck.
- ▶ While the project is progressing, ThinkBig is behind schedule and has requested a 6-month extension, which has been approved by the State.
 - ▶ Extended negotiations prior to project commencement
 - ▶ Struggle to collect easements for key segments
 - ▶ Construction began in winter

NCN Broadband Buildout

Easements

- ▶ The County continues to encourage residents to grant ThinkBig an easement (where needed), so that ThinkBig may bury the broadband fiber underground.
- ▶ Burying fiber underground is preferred over pole installation due to:
 - ▶ Faster installation, and
 - ▶ Better protection for the fiber requiring less maintenance and resulting in less down time.

ThinkBig Charles County Grant

Current Statistics



Nanjemoy

customer service agreements received: 281
easements received: 162



Cobb Neck

customer service agreements received: 84
easements received: 76

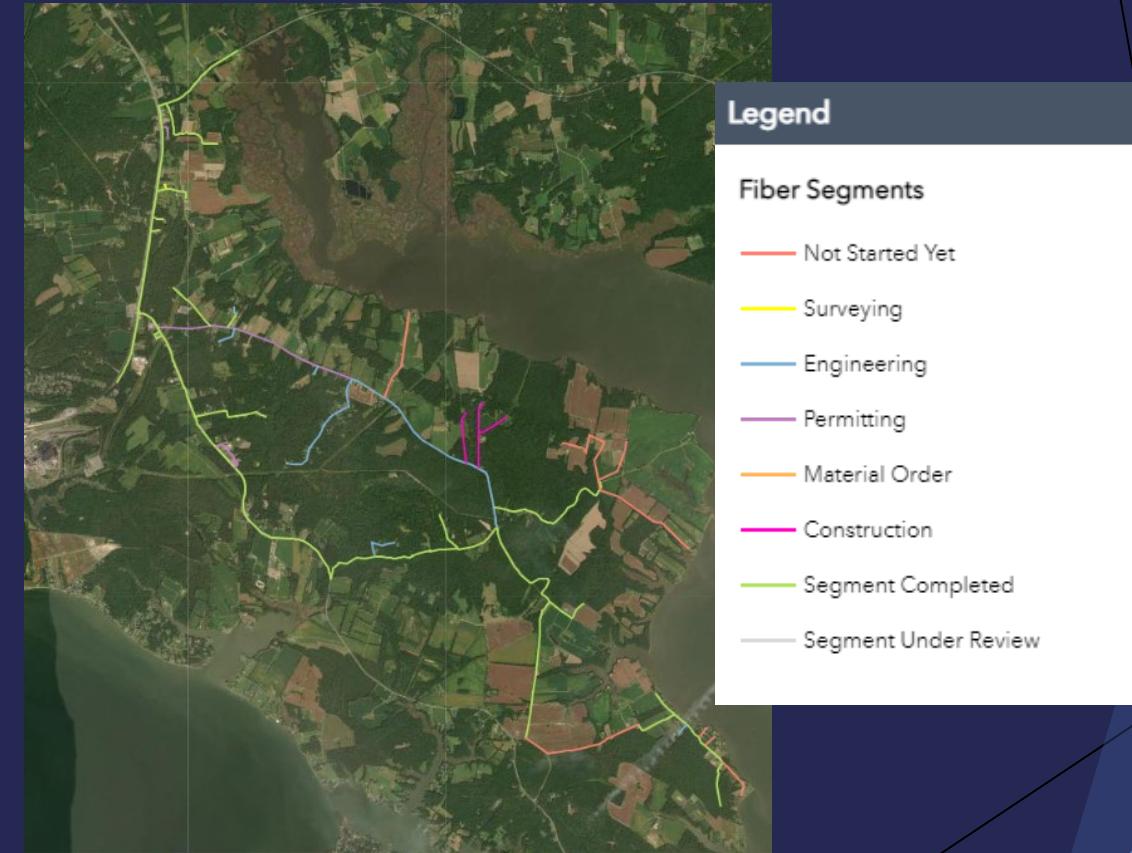


Total Nanjemoy and Cobb Neck

90 lit customers
25.71 percent take rate

NCN Broadband Buildout

Build Progress - Maps



NCN Broadband Buildout

Project Update

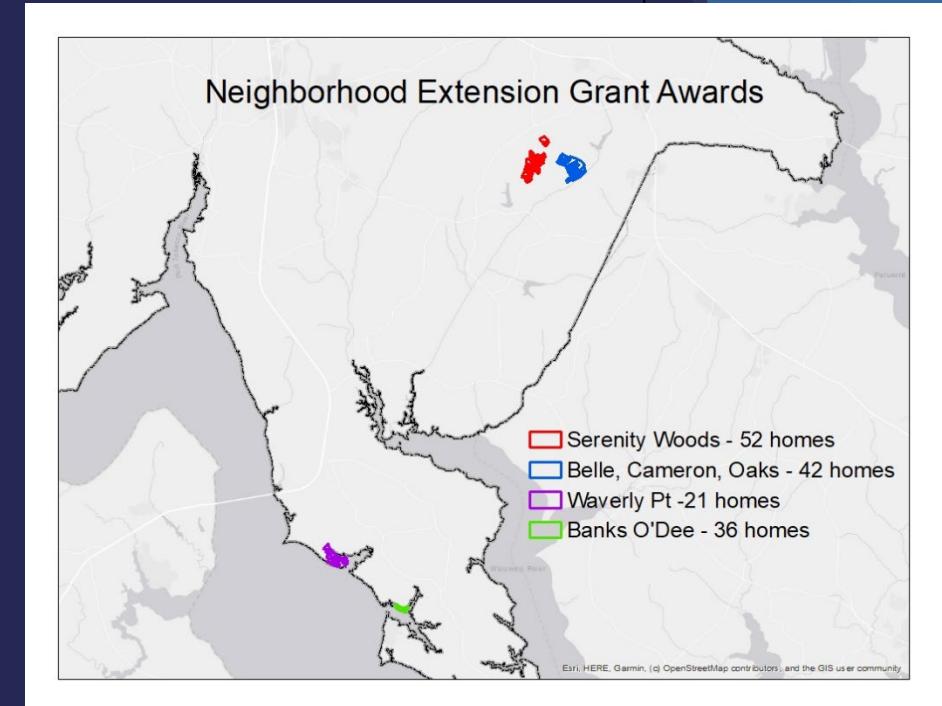
- ▶ Follow the progress on our website, including the [Interactive Map](#)!



NBE-Cat2

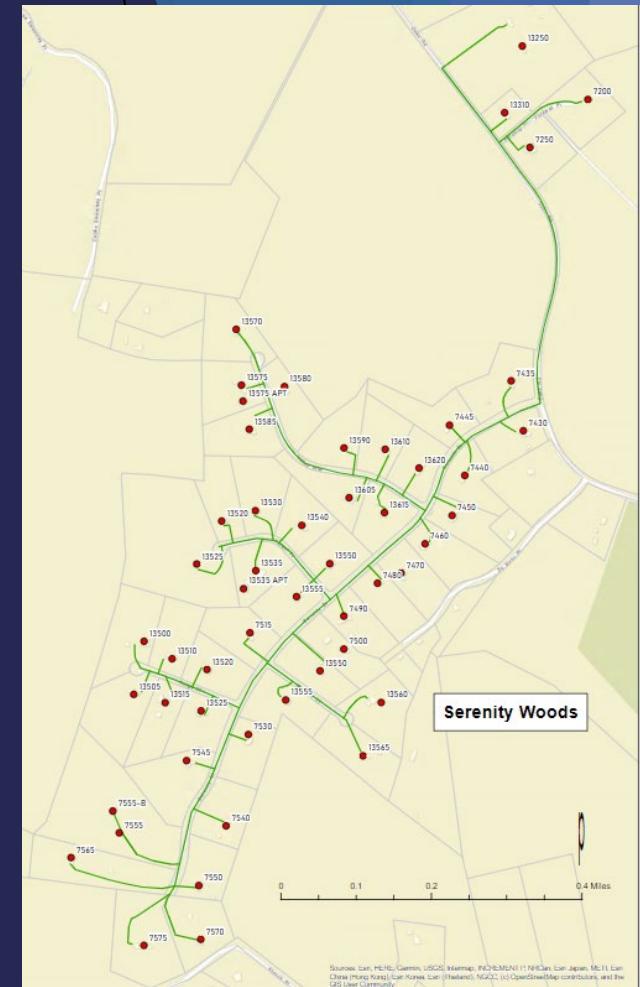
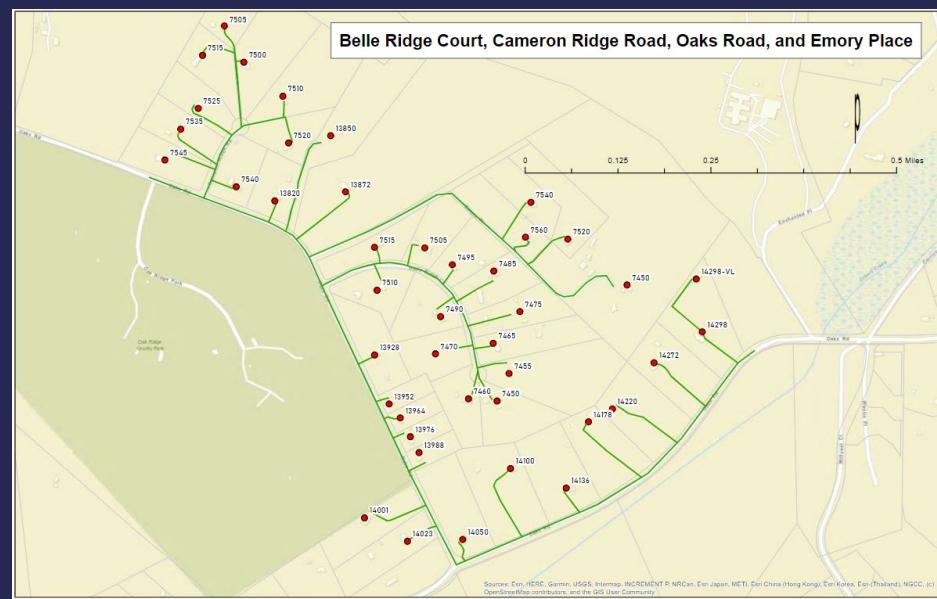
Project Update

- ▶ This project is addressing 4 Category 2 areas.
 - ▶ Waverly Point build was completed in March 2022
 - ▶ Serenity Woods build was completed in June 2022
 - ▶ Belle Ridge build was completed in September 2022
 - ▶ Banks O'Dee is in progress
- ▶ County staff meets with Comcast bi-weekly to get updates on the neighborhood builds.
- ▶ Project updates are posted on the County's website:
 - ▶ <https://www.charlescountymd.gov/our-county/rural-broadband/nbe-cat2>



NBE-Cat2

Maps



Long Driveway Grant Program

Overview

- ▶ Developed to assist our Category 3 residents:
 - ▶ Properties that are located at the end of long driveways.
 - ▶ The cost to the resident to extend service down these driveways can be exorbitant.
- ▶ Preliminary questionnaire has been collecting addresses from residents so we can try to get an idea of how many properties will need this type of assistance and where in the County they are located.

Long Driveway Grant Program

Development of Program

- ▶ Subcommittee of the Task Force drafted the program.
 - ▶ Included the Chief Equity Officer to evaluate the program through an equity lens, in accordance with Resolution No. 2021-24
- ▶ Presented to and received approval from the larger Task Force.
- ▶ Shared with ThinkBig and Comcast, who provided feedback.
- ▶ The County Attorney's Office has done a legal review.
- ▶ If approved by the Board of County Commissioners, this program will be the first of its kind in the State - and one of the first in the nation!
 - ▶ The Maryland Office of Statewide Broadband may model parts of their program after ours.

Long Driveway Grant Program

Key Points

- ▶ Funded through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)
- ▶ ISP shall determine the best construction method and location for the service drop installation
- ▶ 1 service drop allowed per household
- ▶ Funding formula:
 - ▶ First \$1000 paid by County
 - ▶ After \$1000, County will pay 90% and resident will pay 10%
 - ▶ County will pay up to \$15,000
- ▶ Hardship waiver - eligible residents (such as those who qualify for the Affordable Connectivity Program) will have their 10% contribution waived

Long Driveway Grant Program

Important Dates

- ▶ Program will “go live” on October 1, 2022
- ▶ Reimbursement eligible from July 1, 2021
- ▶ Program will run through December 31, 2024

Requests for Approval

NCN Broadband Buildout

- ▶ Request for approval to extend the NCN Broadband Buildout completion date by 6 months - from December 2023 to June 2024.

LD - Cat 3

- ▶ Request for approval of the LD - Cat 3 grant program.
- ▶ Request for approval to use a portion of the ARPA funding that has been set aside for Broadband projects.

Questions / Comments



Charles County Government
200 Baltimore Street • La Plata, MD • 301-645-0550
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www.CharlesCountyMD.gov



About Charles County Government

The mission of Charles County Government is to provide our citizens the highest quality service possible in a timely, efficient and courteous manner. To achieve this goal, our government must be operated in an open and accessible atmosphere, be based on comprehensive long- and short-term planning and have an appropriate managerial organization tempered by fiscal responsibility. We support and encourage efforts to grow a diverse workplace. Charles County is a place where all people thrive and businesses grow and prosper; where the preservation of our heritage and environment is paramount; where government services to its citizens are provided at the highest level of excellence; and where the quality of life is the best in the nation.

It is the policy of Charles County to provide equal employment opportunity to all persons regardless of race, color, sex, age, national origin, religious or political affiliation or opinion, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, genetic information, gender identity or expression, or any other status protected by law.