



Rural Broadband Task Force

November 14, 2023

Jenifer M. Ellin, Acting Deputy County Administrator
Evelyn Jacobson, Chief Information Officer
Matt Jacobson, Network Specialist II
Dina Barclay, Director of Community Services

Rural Broadband Task Force

Members

- ▶ Jenifer Ellin & Erica Rizor, County Administration
- ▶ Evelyn Jacobson, Matt Jacobson & Gina Markovich, Information Technology Division
- ▶ Renesha Miles, Chief Equity Officer
- ▶ Jeffrey Clements, Department of Emergency Services
- ▶ Michelle DeSoto, Economic Development
- ▶ 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**
- ▶ **Current Projects**
 - ▶ Nanjemoy/Cobb Neck (NCN) Broadband Buildout
 - ▶ North Nanjemoy Broadband Buildout
 - ▶ Dentsville/Charlotte Hall (DCH) Broadband Buildout
 - ▶ Long Driveway Grant (LD-Cat3)
 - ▶ Connect America Fund (CAF) II
 - ▶ Connected Devices
- ▶ **Upcoming Projects**
 - ▶ FY23 Network Infrastructure Grant
- ▶ **Completed Projects**
 - ▶ Neighborhood Broadband Expansion (NBE-Cat2)
- ▶ **FCC Mapping Project**
- ▶ **Funding Chart**
- ▶ **Future Opportunities**
 - ▶ Difficult to Serve Properties Grant
 - ▶ BEAD
- ▶ **Questions & Comments**

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”

Current Projects

NCN Broadband Buildout - Project Status

- ▶ This project addresses two large Category 1 areas in the County - Nanjemoy and parts of Cobb Neck and includes passing approximately 1,408 properties. A July 2023 addendum added another 20 properties to be passed.
 - ▶ ThinkBig is the provider for this project.
- ▶ To date, 362 properties in Nanjemoy and 111 properties in Cobb Neck have been connected to ThinkBig's fiber optic network.
- ▶ Another 213 properties have signed service agreements and are awaiting connection.
- ▶ The project deadline has been extended to February 29, 2024.
- ▶ 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.

Current Projects

NCN Broadband Buildout - Build Progress



Legend

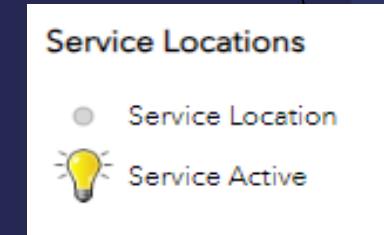
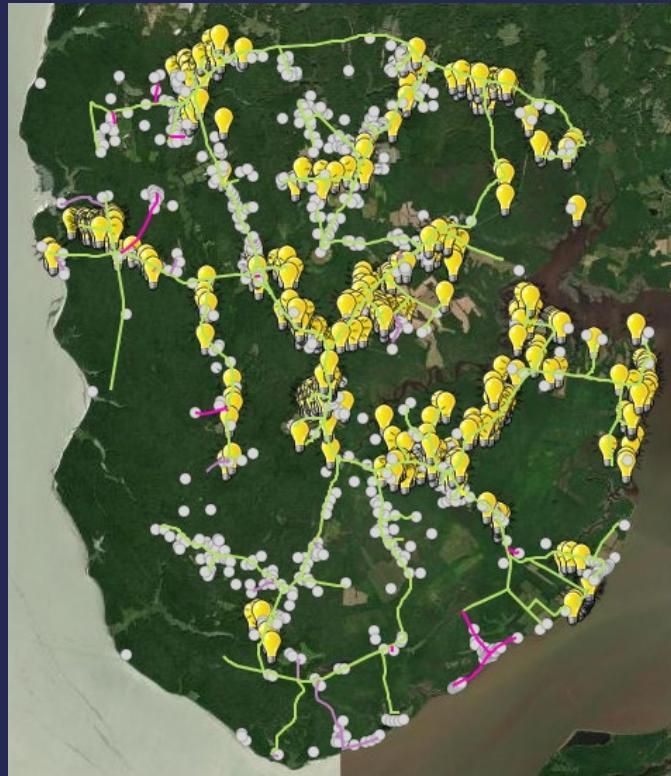
Fiber Segments

- Not Started Yet
- Surveying
- Engineering
- Permitting
- Material Order
- Construction
- Segment Completed
- Segment Under Review

Current Projects

NCN Broadband Buildout - Service Locations

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



Current Projects

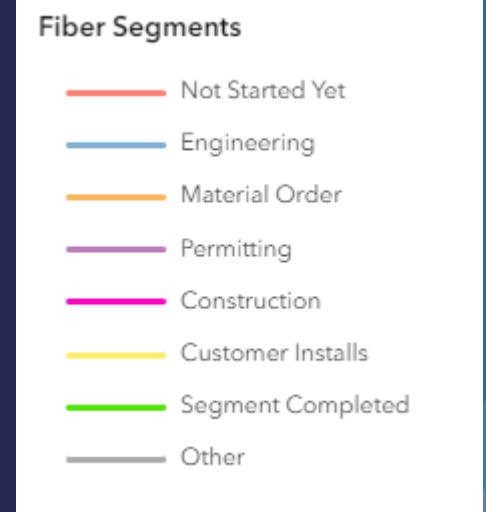
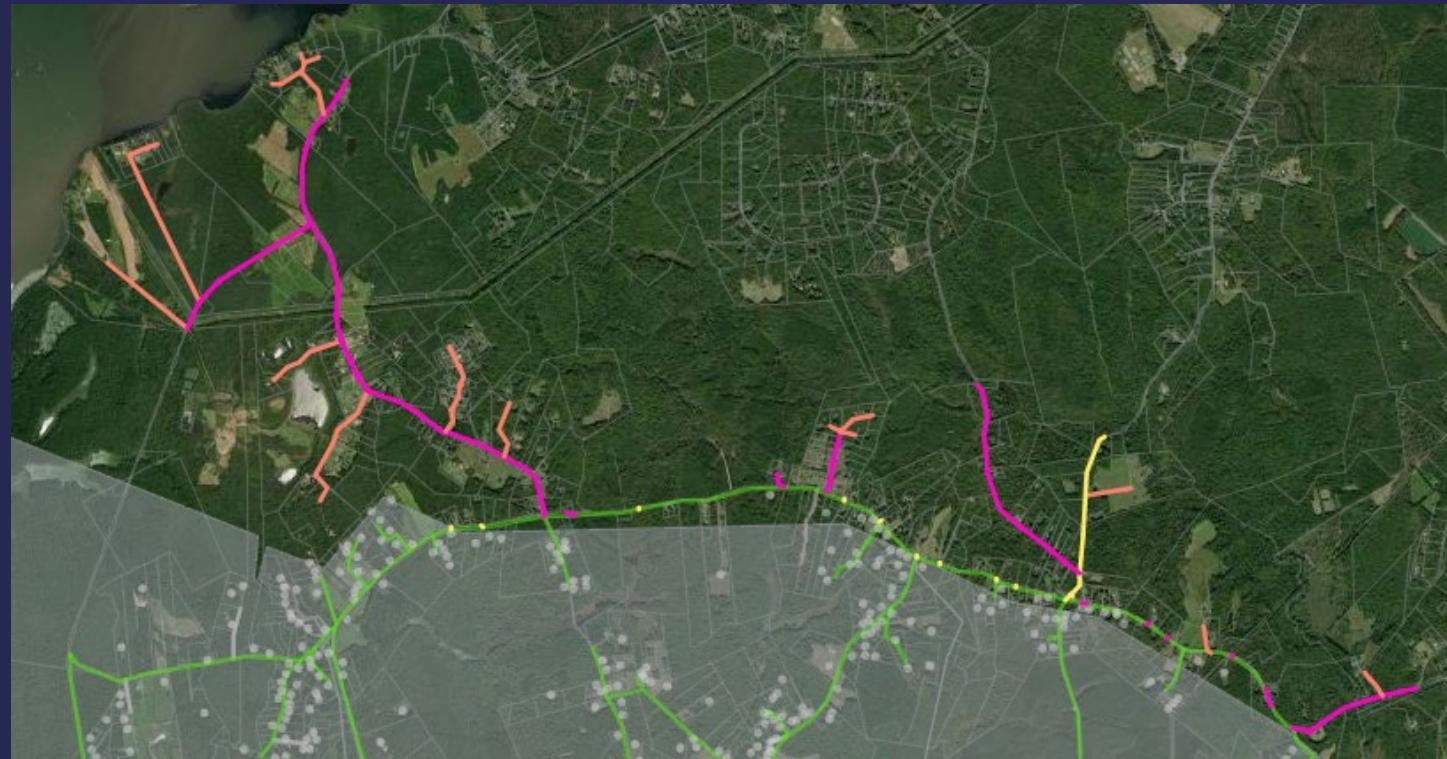
Nanjemoy North Broadband Buildout - Project Status

- ▶ This project is adjacent to the Nanjemoy portion of the NCN Broadband Buildout and contains approximately 290 properties.
 - ▶ ThinkBig is the provider for this project.
- ▶ ThinkBig began construction in July 2023.
- ▶ This project was phased in a different manner, where Phase 1 contains roads that do not require an easement, and Phase 2 contains roads with properties that do require an easement.
- ▶ As with the NCN project, the County encourages residents to grant ThinkBig an easement (where needed), so that ThinkBig may bury the broadband fiber underground.

Current Projects

Nanjemoy North Broadband Buildout - Build Progress

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



Current Projects

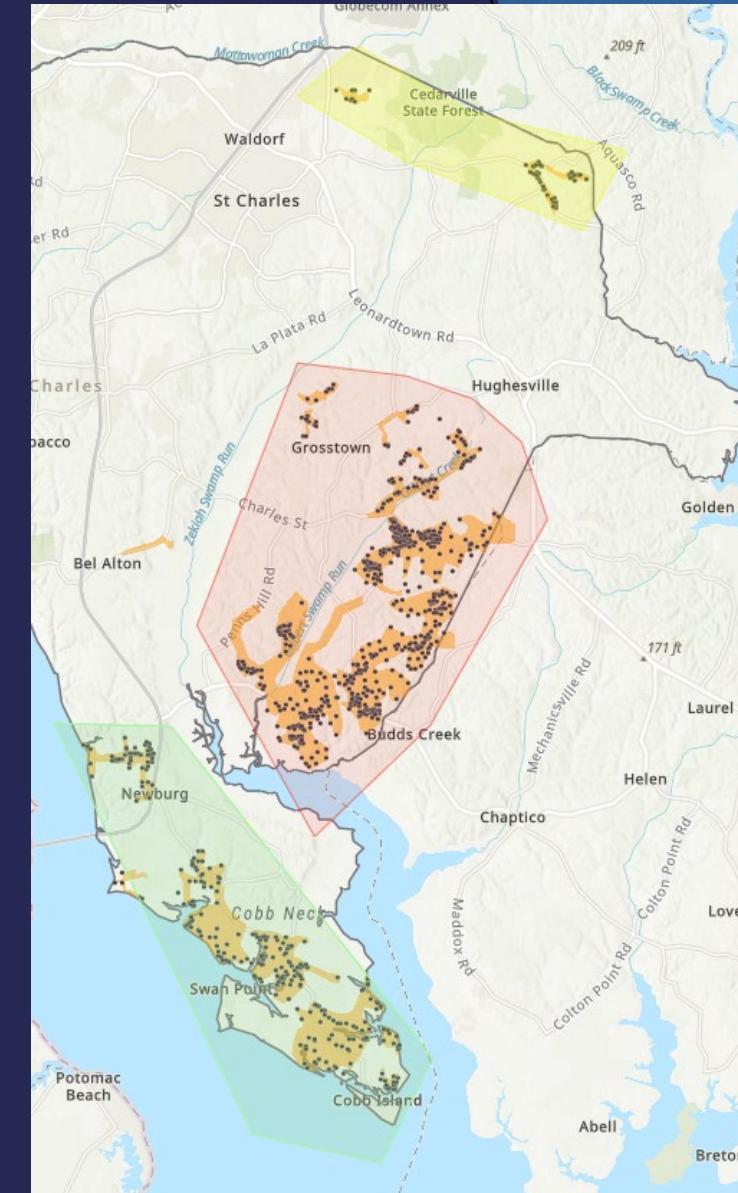
DCH Broadband Buildout - Project Status

- ▶ This project addresses two large Category 1 areas - Dentsville and parts of Cobb Neck, as well as some additional homes in Hughesville.
 - ▶ Comcast is the provider for this project.
- ▶ Comcast submitted the grant to the state with approximately 1,000 properties to be passed.
- ▶ Comcast's process is (1) walk the grant area to survey all the homes, (2) scrub the data they collect, and (3) design the project.
 - ▶ Once they are completed with the design, they will let us know the exact count of homes.
- ▶ Comcast has already applied for some of the pole line applications.

Current Projects

DCH Broadband Buildout - Project Maps

- ▶ Cluster 1 - Newburg (green)
- ▶ Cluster 2 - Charlotte Hall (red)
- ▶ Cluster 3 - Hughesville (purple)



Current Projects

LD-Cat3 Grant - Project Overview

- ▶ County sponsored grant which will assist with funding the constructions of service drops to connect homes at the end of long, private driveways to the existing broadband network on the road.
- ▶ The program will run through December 31, 2024. The ISP shall determine the best construction method and location for the service drop (1 per household) installation.
- ▶ 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 in total
- ▶ Hardship waiver - eligible residents (such as those who qualify for the Affordable Connectivity Program) will have their 10% contribution waived.

Current Projects

LD-Cat3 Grant - Providers

- ▶ ThinkBig
 - ▶ Program is well underway.
 - ▶ To date, 62 residents have received the LD-Cat3 grant.
- ▶ Comcast
 - ▶ Working out details
 - ▶ ROW extensions
- ▶ Verizon
 - ▶ Has stated that they do not have any long driveways.

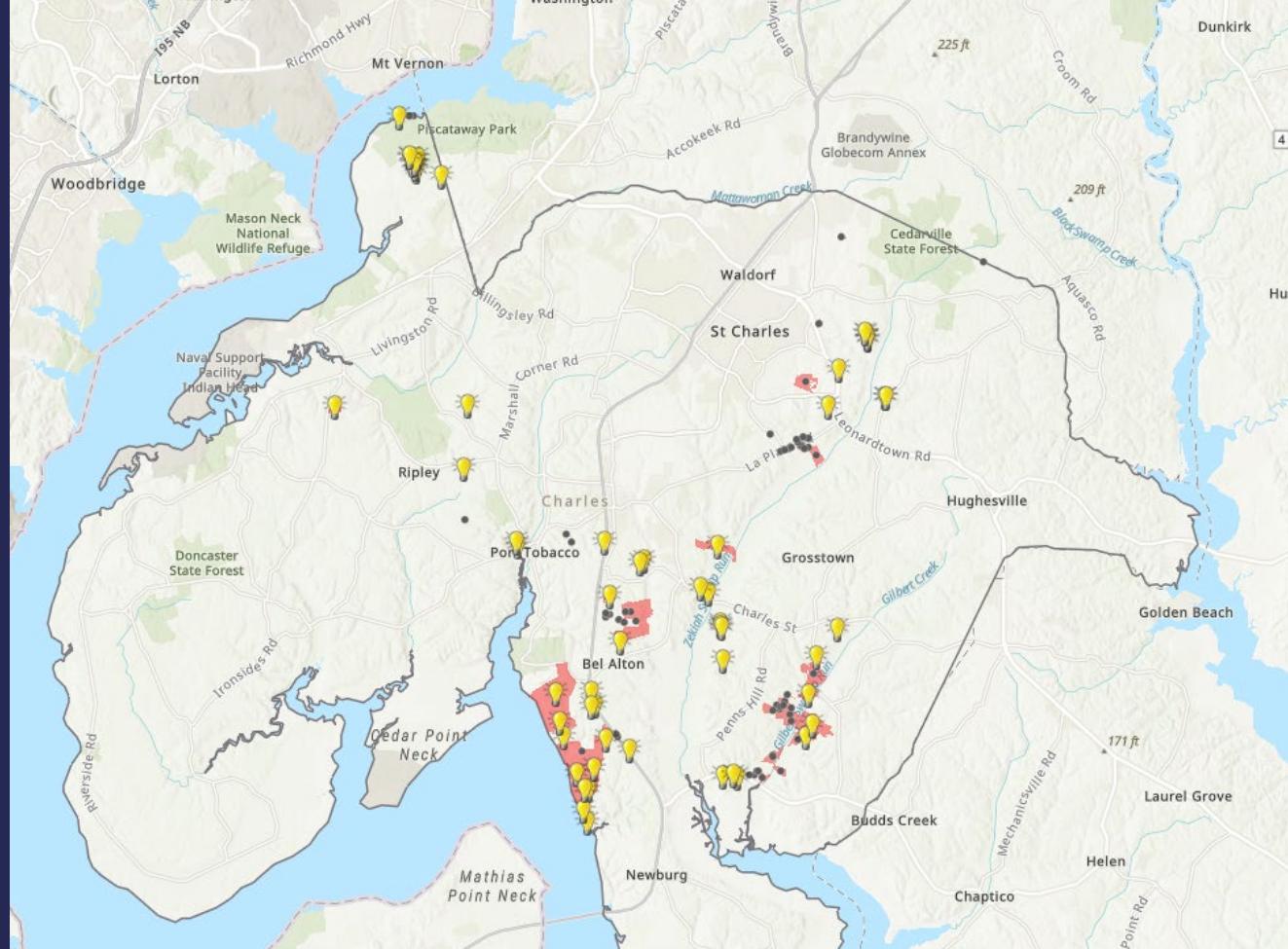
Current Projects

CAFII Project - Overview

- ▶ Connect America Fund Grant
- ▶ In 2018, the FCC opened up the CAFII Grant and Verizon was awarded funding to build to 146 Charles County properties.
- ▶ To date, they have built to 112 properties.
- ▶ They were given 6 years to complete this build, which means that all 146 should be built by August 2024.

Current Projects

CAFII - Map



Current Projects

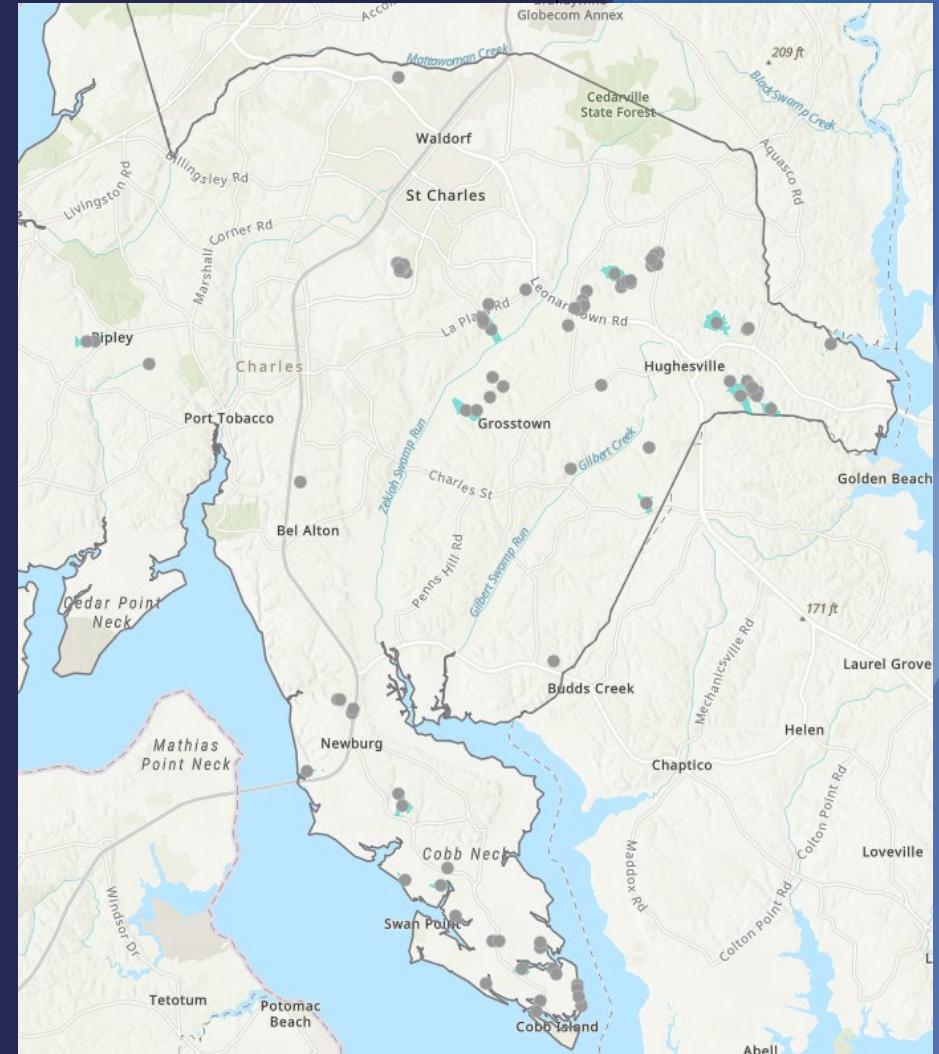
Connected Devices - Project Status

- ▶ The County partnered with Charles County Public Library for this grant program designed to assist in digital equity & inclusion efforts.
- ▶ Provides new, internet-enabled laptops to families in need.
 - ▶ Must be at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines to be eligible to participate.
- ▶ 500 devices were requested as part of the first round of funding, and all 500 have been distributed.
 - ▶ We requested, and were awarded, 300 additional devices in the second round of funding.

Upcoming Projects

FY23 Network Infrastructure Grant - Comcast

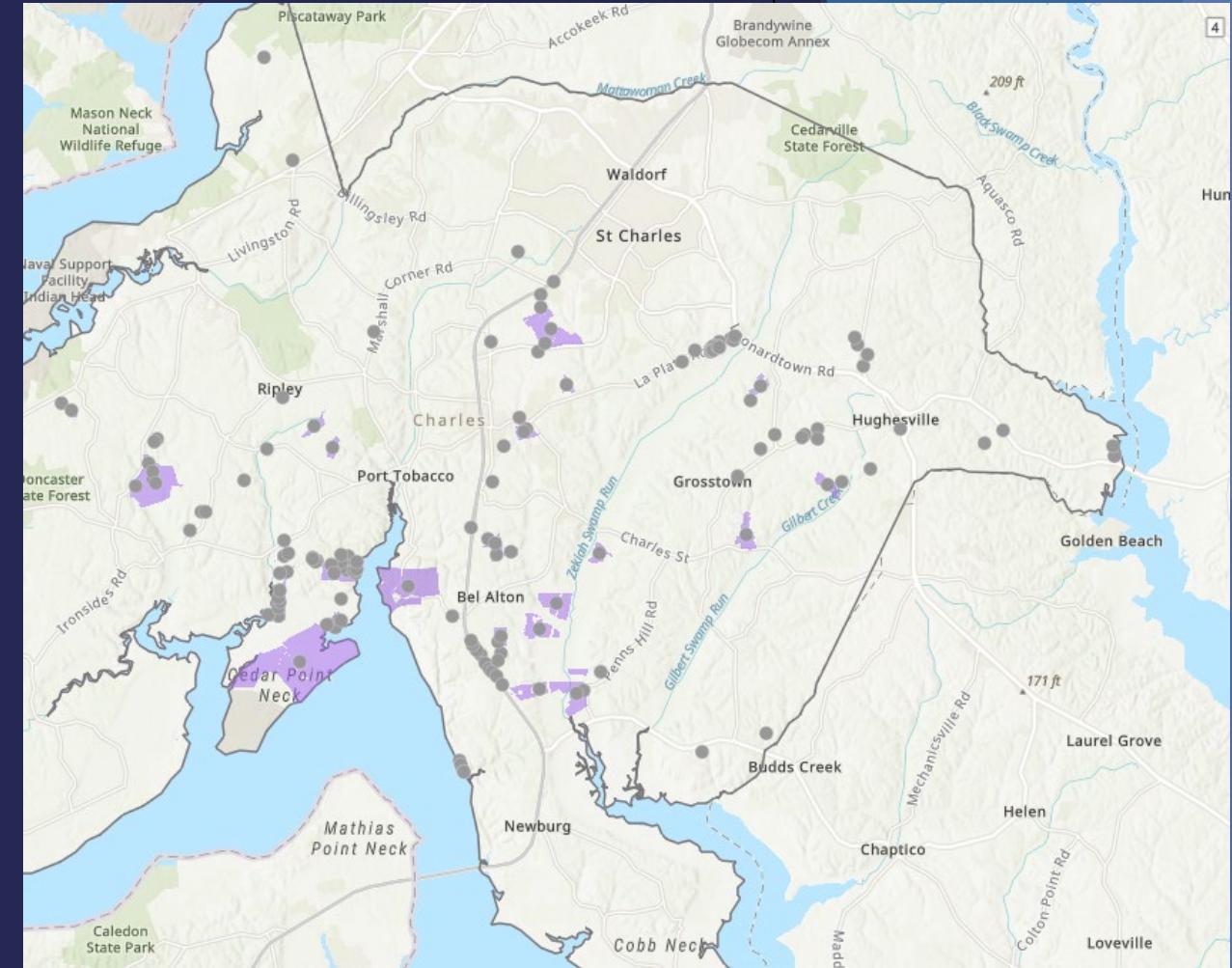
- ▶ Under the MD State FY23 Network Infrastructure Grant, Comcast received \$1,689,453 to provide service to approximately 94 homes.
- ▶ Many of these homes are located in areas where Comcast already provides service or where Comcast plans to build under the DCH Grant.
- ▶ The County is waiting for Comcast to complete their MOU with MD State; once that is done, the County will finalize their MOU with Comcast.



Upcoming Projects

FY23 Network Infrastructure Grant - Verizon

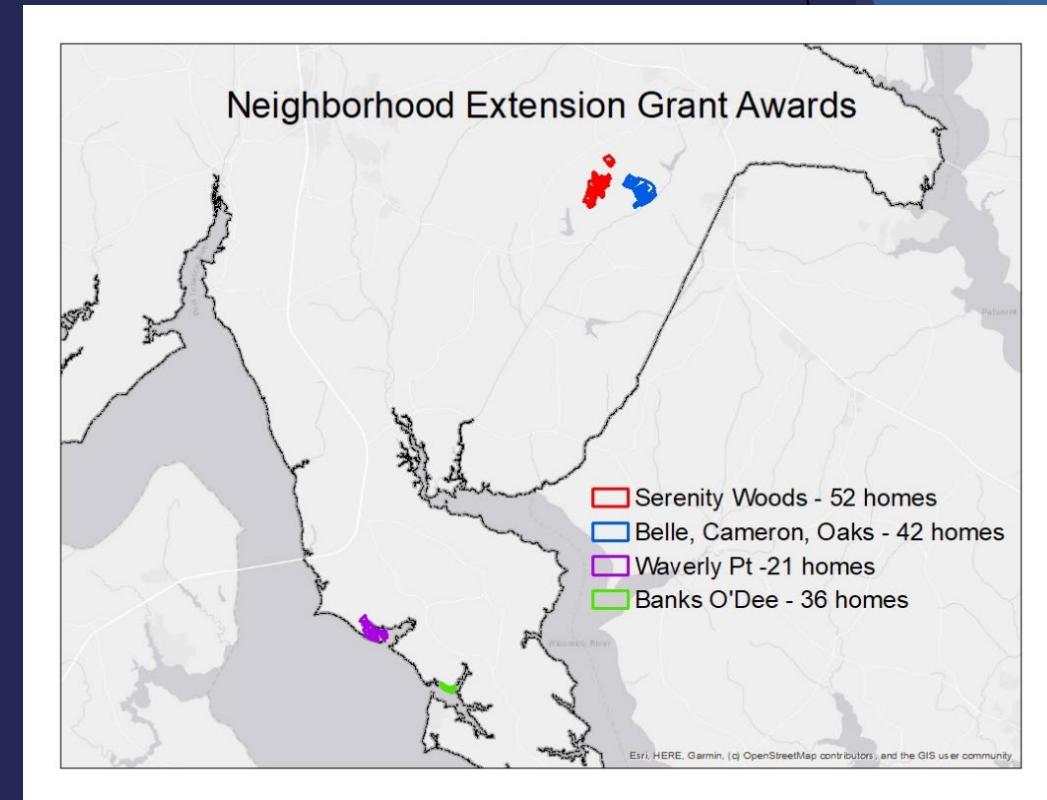
- ▶ Under the MD State FY23 Network Infrastructure Grant, Verizon received \$1,270,673 to provide service to approximately 200 homes.
- ▶ This is the first time that Verizon has received a MD State Grant to build in Charles County.
- ▶ We learned this week that Verizon and MD State just finalized their MOU.
 - ▶ The County and Verizon will begin working on their MOU.



Completed Project

NBE-Cat2

- ▶ Comcast completed construction in November 2022.
- ▶ The project brought internet access to over 150 homes in various Category 2 areas.
- ▶ Residents in the FSA may contact Comcast to get connected to their network.



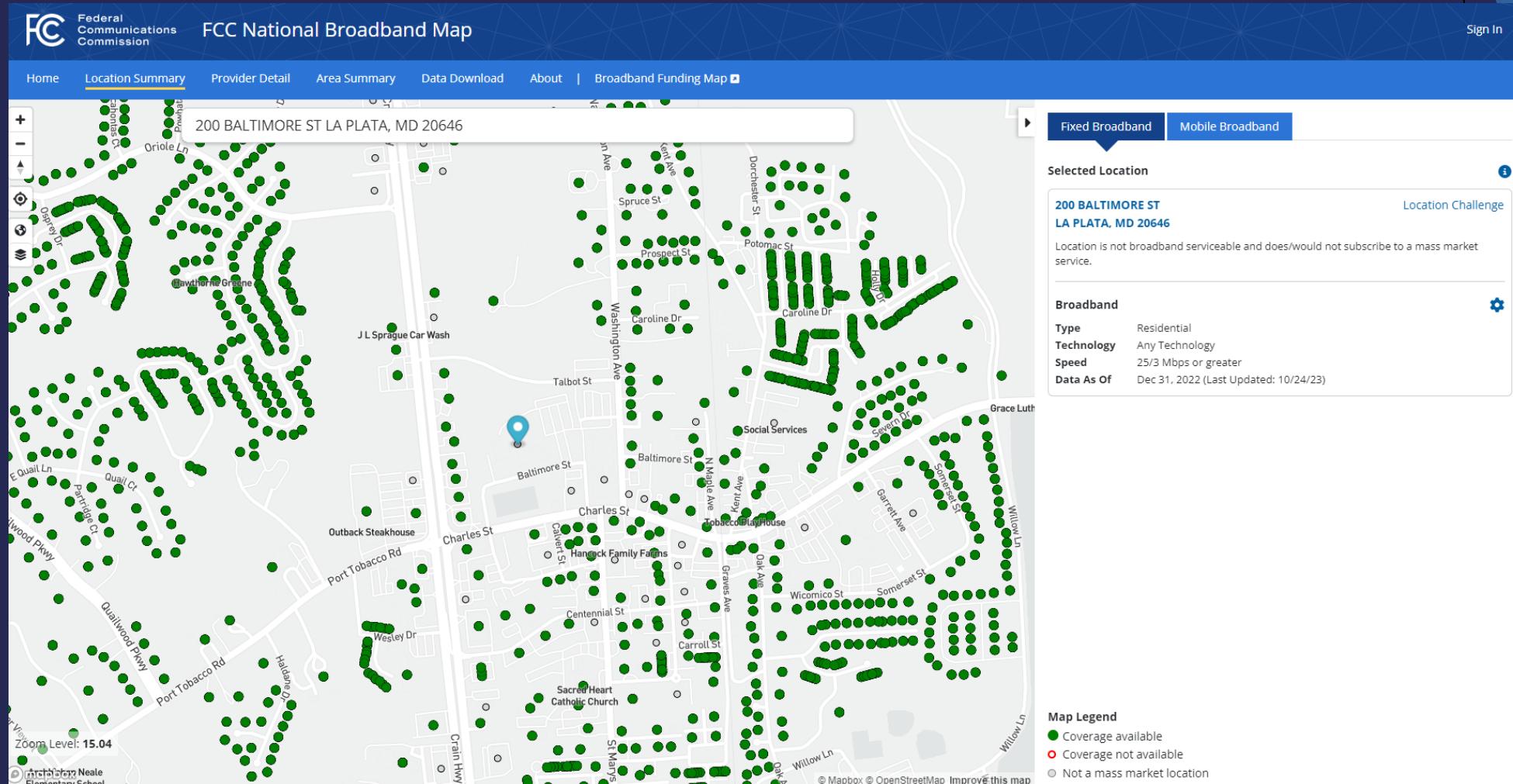
Summary of Grants Awarded

Project Name	Category	State Grant	Funding Awarded	Total Project Cost	Properties in FSA*
TBD (Comcast)	1 & 2	FY23 Connect Maryland	\$1,689,453	\$2,060,308	TBD
TBD (Verizon)	1 & 2		\$1,270,673	\$ TBD	
Dentsville/Charlotte Hall	1 & 2	Connect Maryland Network Infrastructure Grant	\$9,664,808	\$11,466,883	996
North Nanjemoy	1		\$884,643	\$1,263,769	350
NBE - Cat 2	2	Expansion of Existing Broadband Networks	\$617,294	\$1,028,825	151
NCN Broadband Buildout	1	Broadband Infrastructure Grant Program	\$2,924,083	\$5,848,166	1,408
		TOTAL:	\$17,050,954	\$21,667,951+	2905+

FCC Mapping Project

- ▶ The FCC has undergone a multi-year effort to improve the accuracy of their broadband mapping.
 - ▶ The FCC collected address level data from broadband providers to generate an accurate map of service availability.
- ▶ The new FCC map was released in November 2022 and the underlying data made available to service providers and government entities.
 - ▶ Charles County Government went through the application process to acquire this data.
- ▶ This data will greatly help the Broadband Task Force's efforts to identify remaining unserved locations in the County.

FCC Mapping Project



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Upcoming Opportunities

MD State FY24 Difficult to Serve Properties Grant

- ▶ The FY24 Difficult to Serve Properties Grant is a new opportunity which will provide local jurisdictions funding to assist with projects focused on bringing broadband to “difficult to serve” properties.
- ▶ These properties could be very remote, could have long driveways, or could have geographic issues (for example, train tracks) that discourage ISPs from delivering broadband service.
- ▶ The grant will pay for up to 75% of the installation costs to bring service to an unserved location.
 - ▶ The maximum grant amount per location is \$8,000.
- ▶ Grant application is due Friday, December 22.

Upcoming Opportunities

BEAD

- ▶ The Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (“BEAD”) program provides federal funding to expand broadband access. The BEAD program will fund broadband planning, infrastructure deployment, and adoption programs.
- ▶ Once final, the BEAD Plan will serve as Maryland’s State Plan establishing its commitments and strategy to support broadband projects over the next five years to close the digital divide in Maryland.
- ▶ MD State is encouraging all Maryland residents to read the draft BEAD plan and to share their feedback and recommendations.
- ▶ Information regarding the BEAD plan can be found at
<https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Broadband/Pages/StatePlans.aspx>

Questions & Comments



Charles County Government
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Equal Opportunity Employer

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.