



# Rural Broadband Task Force

January 14, 2025

**Jenifer M. Ellin**, Acting Deputy County Administrator  
**Bill Kidwell**, Chief Information Officer  
**Matt Jacobson**, Network Specialist II

# Rural Broadband Task Force

## Members

- ▶ Jenifer Ellin & Erica Rizor, County Administration
- ▶ Bill Kidwell, 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**
- ▶ **In Progress**
  - ▶ North Nanjemoy Broadband Buildout
  - ▶ MD FY22 Infrastructure Grant - Comcast  
(Newburg/Dentsville/Charlotte Hall)
  - ▶ MD FY23 Infrastructure Grant - Comcast
  - ▶ MD FY23 Infrastructure Grant - Verizon
- ▶ **In Progress (con't)**
  - ▶ Long Driveway Grant (LD-Cat3)
  - ▶ Connect America Fund (CAF) II
  - ▶ Difficult to Serve Properties Grant
- ▶ **Completed**
  - ▶ Nanjemoy/Cobb Neck (NCN) Broadband Buildout
- ▶ **Future Opportunities**
  - ▶ 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”

# In Progress

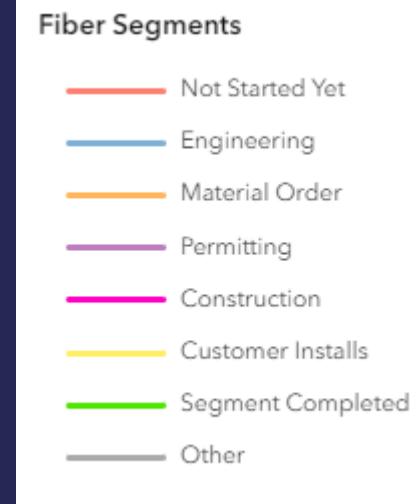
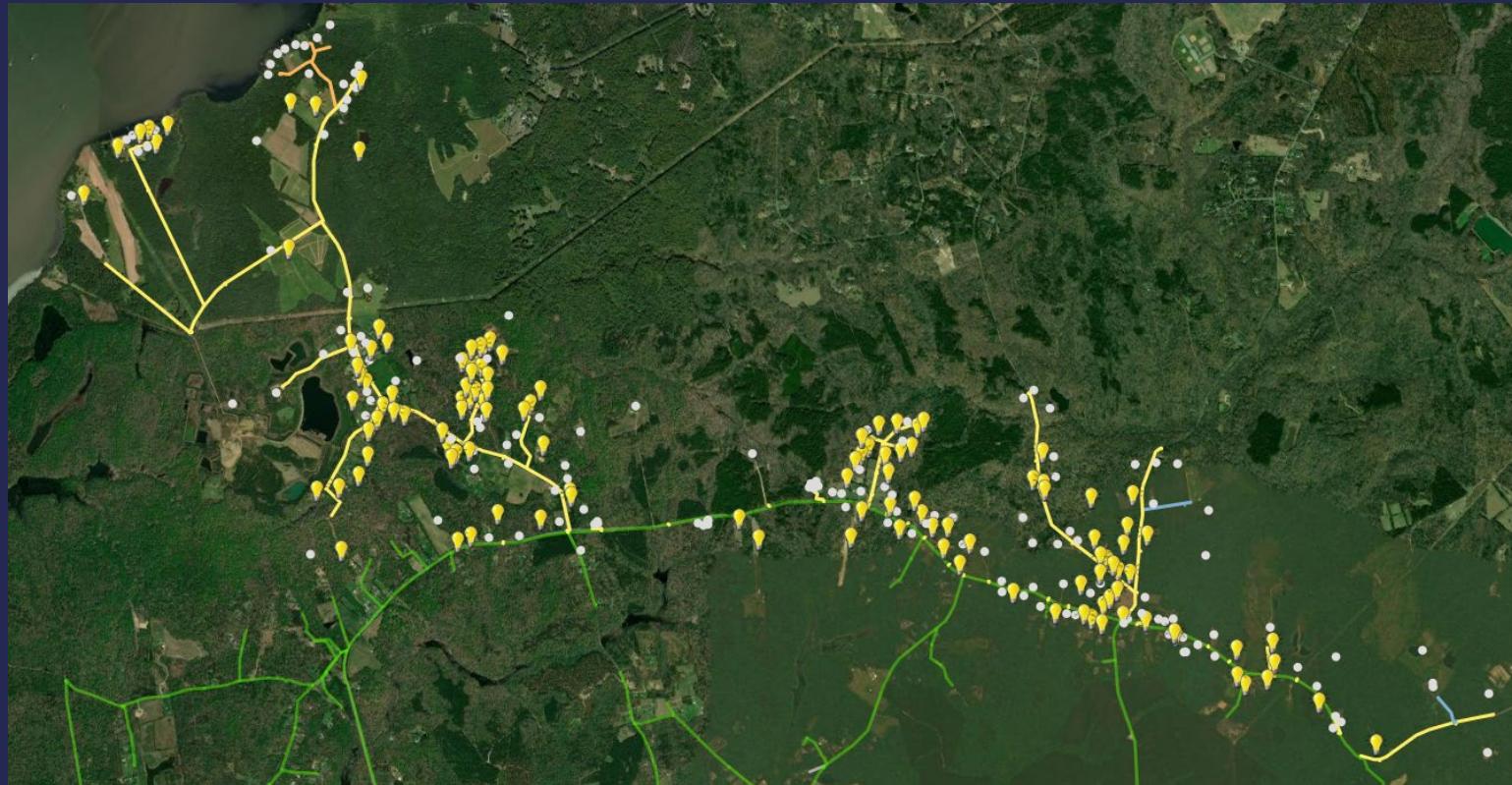
## Nanjemoy North Broadband Buildout - Project Status

- ▶ This project is adjacent to the Nanjemoy portion of the NCN Broadband Buildout and contains approximately 275 properties.
- ▶ ThinkBig began construction in July 2023.
- ▶ The project is scheduled to be completed by August 31, 2025.
- ▶ Only 3 segments left to be constructed in the project, currently held up by easements.
- ▶ To date, ThinkBig has passed 260 homes and connected 130 homes.

# In Progress

## Nanjemoy North Broadband Buildout - Build Progress

### ► Interactive Map



# In Progress

## FY22 MD Infrastructure Grant Broadband Buildout - Comcast Newburg/Charlotte Hall/Dentsville

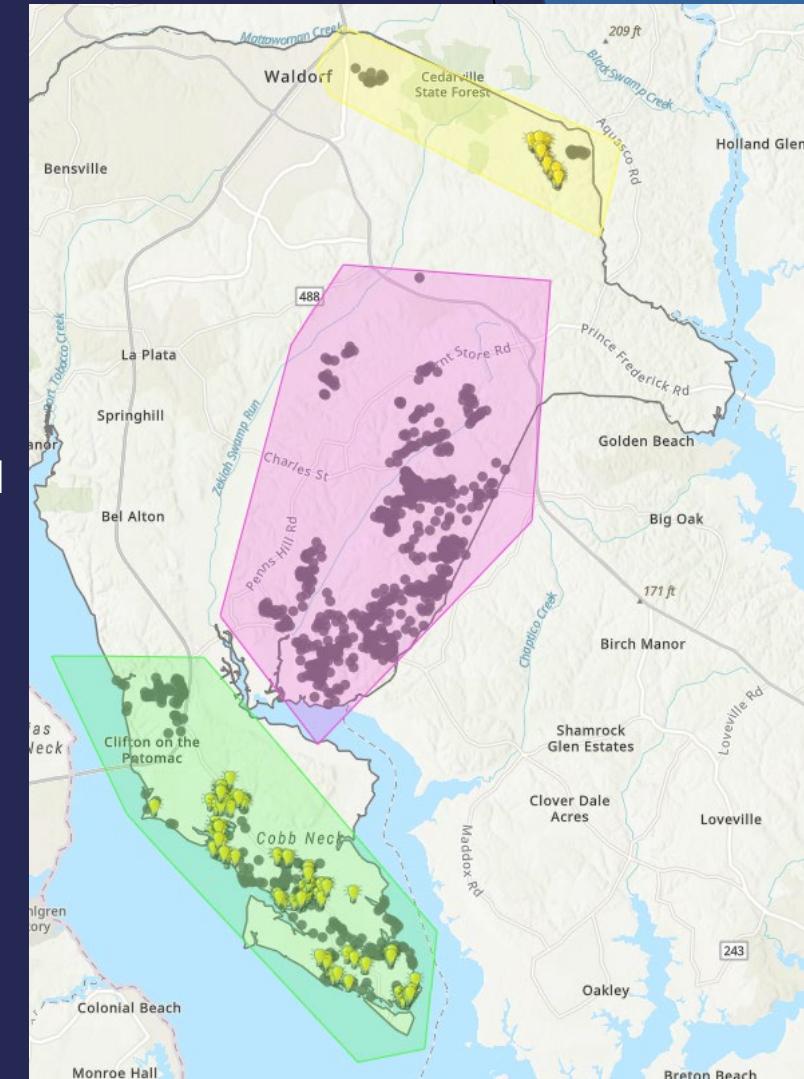
- ▶ In mid 2022, Comcast received grants from MD State and Charles County to bring broadband to Dentsville/Charlotte Hall (a category 1 area), Newburg (a category 2 and 3 area), as well as some additional homes in Hughesville.
- ▶ The Comcast Broadband Buildout project is planned to pass 998 locations - residences and businesses.
- ▶ The project is scheduled to be completed by August 31, 2025.
- ▶ IT meets with the Comcast Project Manager on a weekly basis.

# In Progress

## FY22 MD Infrastructure Grant Broadband Buildout - Comcast Newburg/Charlotte Hall/Dentsville

Comcast has divided the project into clusters

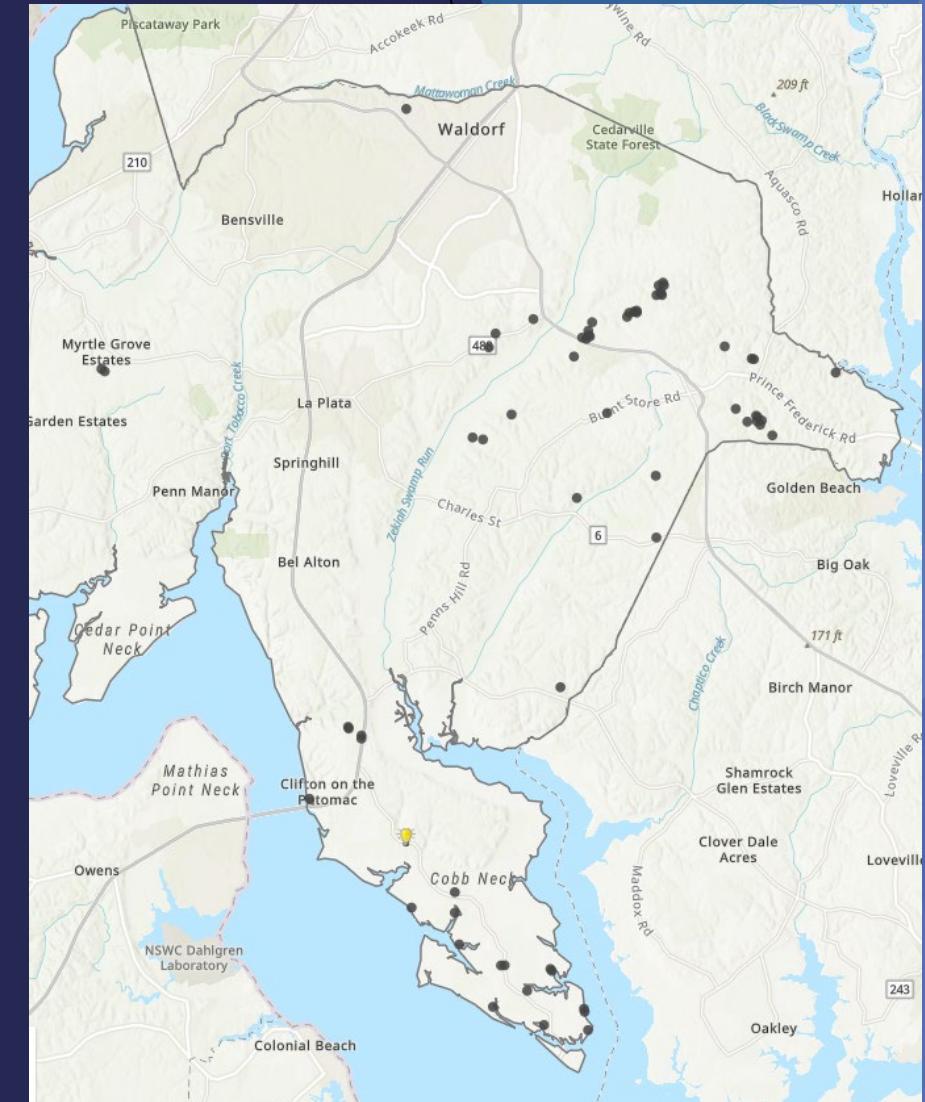
- ▶ Cluster 1 - Newburg/Cobb Neck (green)
  - ▶ Significant construction completed in Cluster 1
  - ▶ Continuing pole work
  - ▶ Underground work is done
  - ▶ Service available to approximately 100 homes in Cluster 1
- ▶ Cluster 2 - Dentsville (pink/purple)
  - ▶ Waiting for pole attachment licenses
    - ▶ Much new infrastructure to be placed on poles
  - ▶ Underground work in progress
- ▶ Cluster 3 - Hughesville (yellow)
  - ▶ Working on easements in all 3 clusters



# In Progress

## FY23 Network Infrastructure Grant - Comcast

- ▶ In mid 2023, Comcast received grants from MD State and the County to build out to approximately 92 homes.
- ▶ Many of these homes are located in areas where Comcast already provides service or where Comcast plans to build under their FY22 Infrastructure Grant.
- ▶ This project must be completed by August 2026.
- ▶ Comcast is constructing these addresses concurrently with their FY22 Infrastructure Grant and will follow the Clusters in the FY22 grant.



# In Progress

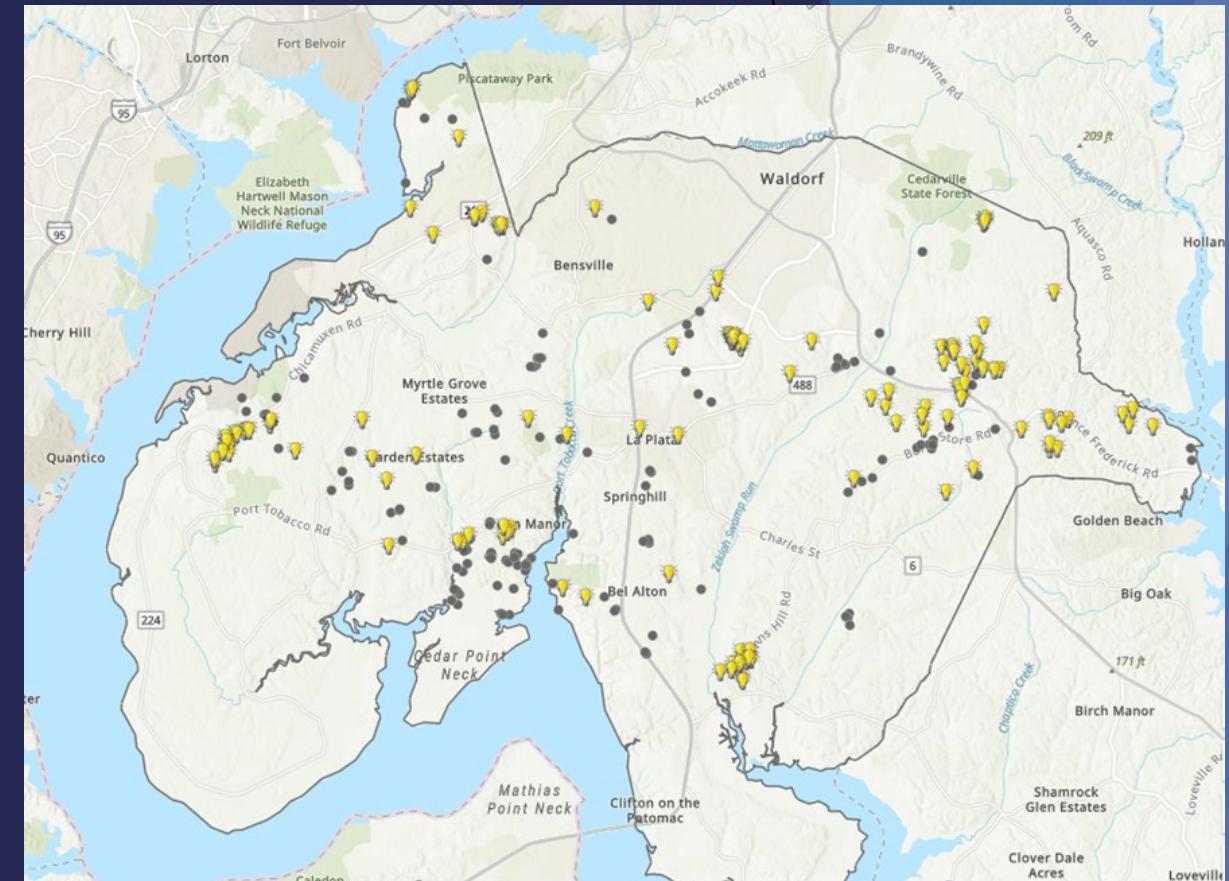
## FY23 Infrastructure Grant Broadband Buildout - Verizon

- ▶ In mid 2023, Verizon received grants from MD State and Charles County to bring broadband to various unserved areas and homes throughout the County.
- ▶ Initially 319 addresses were included in the grant, which was filtered down to approximately 87 serviceable address addresses.
- ▶ In September 2024, OSP approved adding 212 addresses to the grant
  - ▶ These addresses replace the addresses filtered from the grant
- ▶ The project is scheduled to be completed by August 31, 2026.
- ▶ IT meets with the Verizon Project Build Team on a bi-weekly basis.

# In Progress

## FY23 Infrastructure Grant Broadband Buildout - Verizon

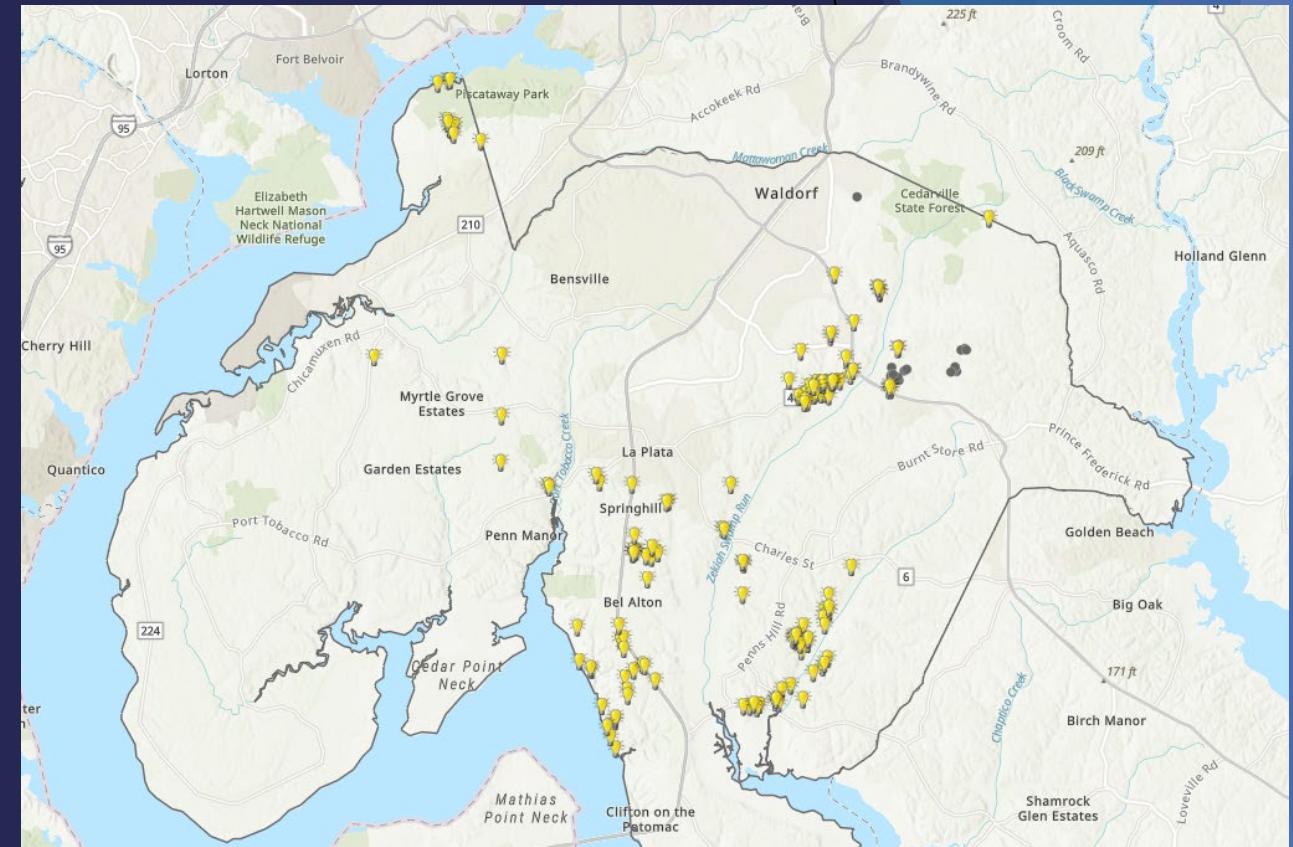
- ▶ Service available to approximately 144 locations to date
- ▶ Verizon has also completed equipment upgrades at several wire centers.
  - ▶ These upgrades allow Verizon to provide upgraded service to both grant locations and existing customers.
- ▶ Continuing design and network construction for the recently added addresses
  - ▶ As of September 2024, they had laid 26.2 miles of new fiber.



# In Progress

## Connect America Fund Grant (CAF) II Project - Overview

- ▶ In 2018, the FCC opened up the CAFII Grant, and Verizon was awarded funding to build to a minimum number of properties in certain census blocks in Charles County.
- ▶ Project must be completed by the end of 2025.
- ▶ Currently 171 addresses included in the project, with service currently available to 151



# In Progress

## LD-Cat3 Grant - Project Overview

- ▶ County sponsored grant which assists with funding the construction of service drops to connect homes at the end of long, private driveways to existing broadband network on the road.
- ▶ Agreements in place to obligate ARPA funding for the program until December 2026. The ISP shall determine the best construction method and location for the service drop (1 per household) installation.
- ▶ Funding formula was recently revised to remove the resident contribution
  - ▶ Done to increase equity across the different grants

# In Progress

## LD-Cat3 Grant - Providers

- ▶ ThinkBig
  - ▶ Program is well underway in the NCN project
    - ▶ North Nanjemoy drops are included in grant
  - ▶ To date, 160 residents have received the County's LD-Cat3 grant for an approximate total of \$100,000
- ▶ Comcast
  - ▶ MOU has been signed
  - ▶ Overlap with Difficult to Serve Program

# In Progress

## MD State FY24 Difficult to Serve Properties Grant

- ▶ In March 2024, the County was awarded funding through the FY24 Difficult to Serve Properties (DSP) Grant, which will assist with projects focused on bringing broadband to “difficult to serve” properties.
- ▶ 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.
- ▶ MOU signed with Comcast in November 2024
- ▶ First batch of 34 addresses submitted to Comcast in December 2024

# NCN Broadband Buildout

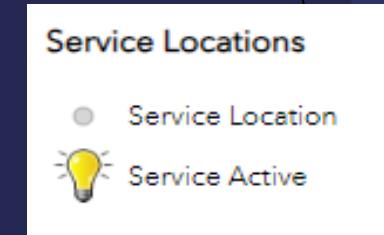
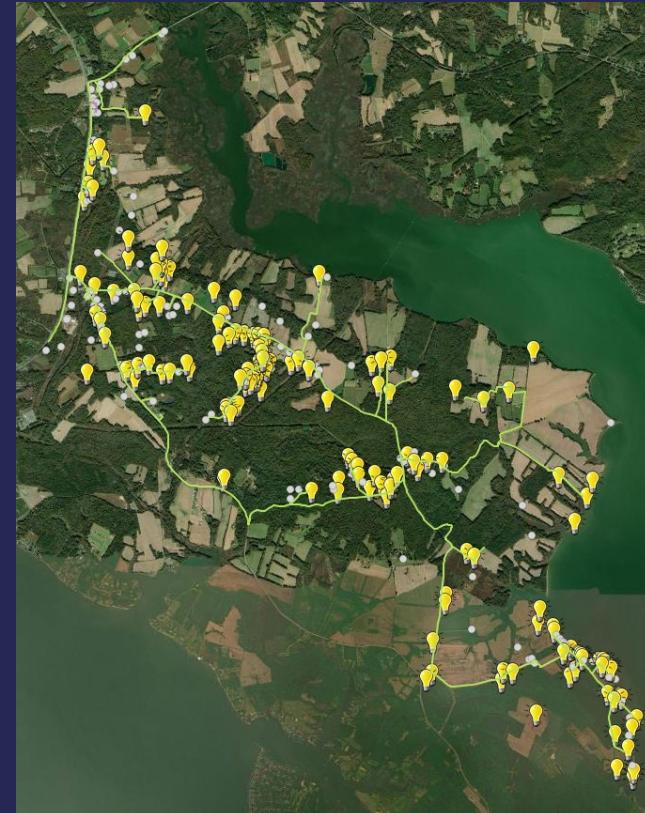
## Completed!

- ▶ In early 2020, ThinkBig Networks, LLC received grants from MD State and Charles County to bring high-speed internet to two large Category 1 areas - Nanjemoy and parts of Cobb Neck.
- ▶ We named this project the NCN Broadband Buildout.
- ▶ The NCN Broadband network would be 100% FTTP (Fiber to the Premise)
- ▶ The NCN Broadband Buildout project was planned to pass 1,408 locations - residences and businesses.
  - ▶ Passing a location means that the owner has the ability to sign up for broadband service
- ▶ **The project was completed in February 2024!**

# Completed Projects

## NCN Broadband Buildout

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



# The Big Picture

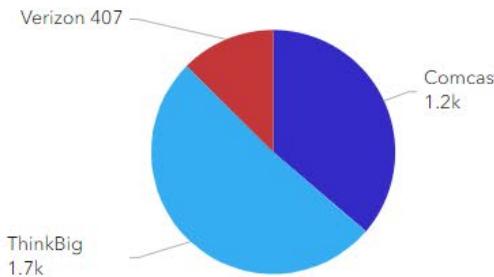
Service Available

⌚ 2241

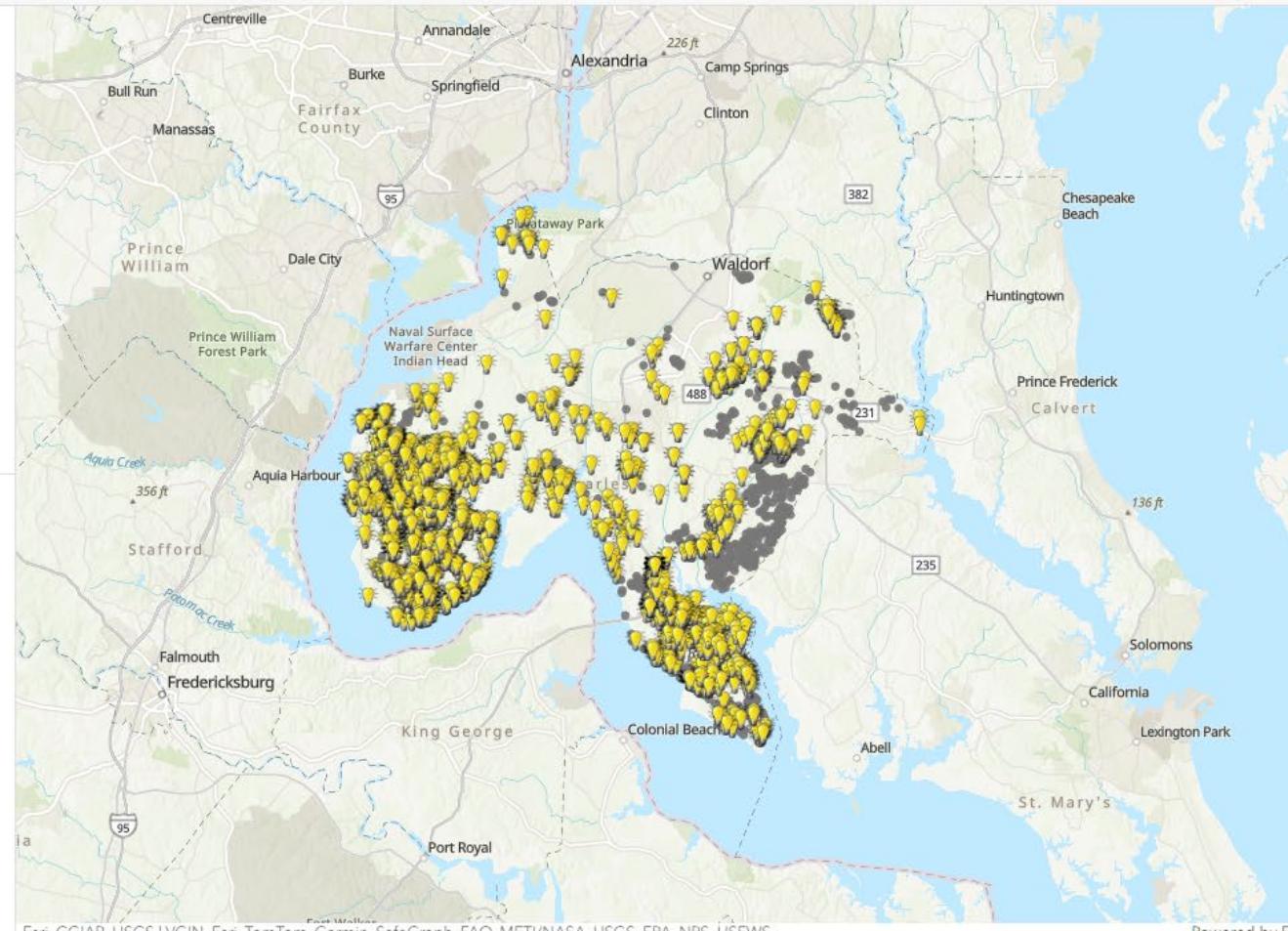
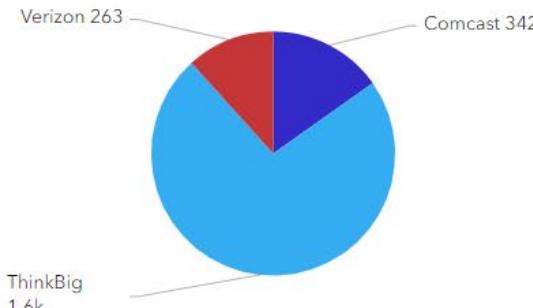
Awaiting Construction

🚚 994

Service Locations Funded By ISP



Service Available By ISP



# In Progress

## Locating Broadband Needs

- ▶ County staff continues work to identify homes which do not have access to high-speed internet.
- ▶ This is not anywhere near as easy as it used to be!
- ▶ When we identify a home that does not have service, we reach out to our existing providers to see if it can be included in a grant or can be reached by a long driveway extension.
- ▶ We encourage residents who do not have access to high-speed internet to complete our Internet Service Questionnaire located at  
<https://www.charlescountymd.gov/our-county/rural-broadband-in-charles-county/internetaccess-questionnaire>

# 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.
- ▶ BEAD Challenge process was recently completed
  - ▶ Challenge process allowed service providers, local governments, and non-profits to challenge existing broadband maps to improve accuracy
  - ▶ County participated in the Challenge process using our internal data
- ▶ Waiting on next steps
  - ▶ Challenge process is followed by Rebuttal Phase then Final Determination
- ▶ 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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[www.CharlesCountyMD.gov](http://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.