



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HIGH-SPEED INTERNET IS COMING TO BLAND AND MONTGOMERY COUNTIES

RICH CREEK, VA, December 5, 2022 – Residents and businesses in Bland and Montgomery counties can now sign up for high-speed internet at www.gigabeam.net. Residents who sign up on the website by checking for availability at their location will begin receiving email updates.

Providing high-speed internet access in unserved communities requires time and a bit of patience. A series of steps must be followed before construction can begin. GigaBeam Networks, Appalachian Power, New River Valley Regional Commission, and the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), along with Bland and Montgomery counties, are pleased to announce the approval by the Virginia State Corporation Commission (SCC) of a critical next step in the process.

On Nov. 30, the SCC approved Appalachian Power's proposal to attach fiber optic cable on its poles. "The commission's decision is great news for everyone involved in this project," said Aaron Walker, Appalachian Power president and chief operating officer. "With SCC approval we can proceed with the next phase of work to make broadband access available to homes and businesses in Montgomery and Bland counties."

Once complete, the project will make broadband access available to approximately 12,100 homes and businesses in Bland and Montgomery counties.

"Our partnership with Appalachian Power, Montgomery and Bland counties allows us to continue efforts to bridge the digital divide in our region," said Michael Clemons, GigaBeam Networks chief executive officer. "Residents and businesses interested in high-speed internet are now able to sign up on our website," said Clemons.

The New River Valley Regional Commission received a Virginia Telecommunication Initiative (VATI) grant from DHCD to assist with the project. "The project partners have long been committed to ensuring all homes and business are connected to high-speed internet and that is becoming a reality with the DHCD investment and recent SCC approval," said Kevin Byrd, executive director of the New River Valley Regional Commission.

Bland and Montgomery County residents can expect high-speed internet access in 2023 and 2024.

"The approval granted by the SCC is another step in our joint effort with Gigabeam and Appalachian Power," said Craig Meadows, Montgomery County administrator. "While the overall process for project approvals and the construction of a project of this scale takes time and

much collaboration locally and at the state level, we are all working diligently to make accessibility to the internet a reality for citizens throughout Montgomery County."

"This announcement is exciting news for our county," said Adam Kidd, a member of the Bland County Board of Supervisors and Bland County Wireless Authority. "We are another step closer to broadband availability in parts of Bland County."

"In a rural locality, projects of this magnitude require significant partnerships and traverse many steps before completion," said Eric Workman, Bland County administrator. "From start to finish, major infrastructural development is a lengthy process; however, the end result will have a significant and positive impact on rural areas with little to no connectivity."

Residents and businesses are encouraged to follow the construction projects on GigaBeam Networks' website by selecting their respective county at <https://gigabeam.net/projects/> .

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Residents and businesses in Bland and Montgomery counties will see Appalachian Power and GigaBeam Networks' crews installing fiber optic cable in early Spring 2023.

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