AGENDA

Broadband Advisory Council Meeting
December 8, 2023
10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

In-Person Option:
Virginia General Assembly Building
Room 500
201 N Ninth St.
Richmond, VA 23219

Virtual Option (via Microsoft Teams):
Join on your computer, mobile app or room device
Click here to join the meeting
Meeting ID: 245 003 516 652
Passcode: 9eQ4HN
Download Teams | Join on the web
Or call in (audio only)
+1 434-230-0065,,281238205#   United States, Lynchburg
Phone Conference ID: 281 238 205#
Find a local number | Reset PIN
Learn More | Meeting options

I.	Opening	
	a. Call to Order	Chairman
	b. Roll Call	DHCD Staff
II.	Consent Agenda	Chairman
III.	Approval of Minutes: August 28, 2023 Meeting	
IV.	Broadband 101 Presentation	Office of Broadband Staff
V.	Office of Broadband Updates	Tamarah Holmes, Ph.D, Director, Office of Broadband and Staff

   a. Virginia Telecommunication Initiative Project Construction Update
   b. Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Update
   c. Virginia Digital Opportunity Plan Overview
   d. Line Extension Customer Assistance Program Updates
   e. Other Updates

VI.	Public Comment	Chairman
VII.	New Business	Council Members
VIII.	Adjournment	Chairman

BROADBAND ADVISORY COUNCIL
UNAPPROVED MINUTES
August 28, 2023
10:00 AM
Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives Training Center
1293 Salem Church Rd
Palmyra, VA 22963
Virtual Option provided via Microsoft Teams

Members Present

Delegate Kathy Byron, Chair
Senator Jennifer Boysko, Vice Chair
Senator Ghazala Hashmi
Senator Lynwood W. Lewis
Delegate David Reid
Delegate Thomas Wright, Jr.
Delegate James Leftwich
Secretary Matt Lohr
Ray LaMura
James Carr
Mike Culp
Kristie Proctor
Casey Logan
Steve Sandy
Richard Schollman

Members Absent

Secretary Caren Merrick

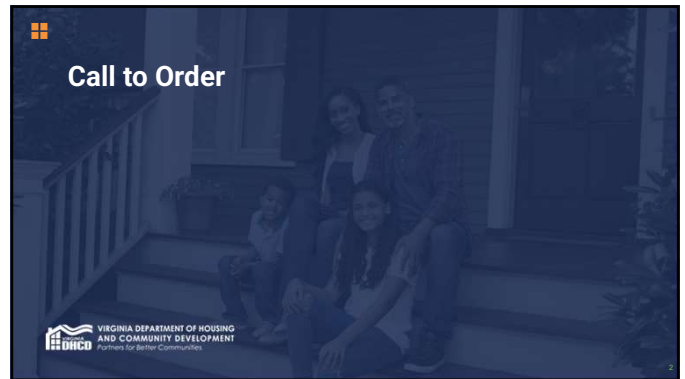|	
Call to Order	Delegate Kathy Byron, Chair of the Broadband Advisory Council, called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. Delegate Bryon recognized Gary Wood of Central Virginia Electric Cooperative and Firefly Fiber Broadband to provide welcome remarks on behalf of the Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives, who served as the meeting host.
Roll Call	Chandler Vaughan, Senior Policy Analyst at the Office of Broadband, called the roll and stated that a quorum was present.
Approval of Minutes: January 20, 2023 Meeting	A motion was made and properly seconded to approve the minutes of the June 9, 2023 meeting of the Broadband Advisory Council. The motion passed to adopt the minutes as presented.
Office of Broadband Updates	Dr. Tamarah Holmes and Office of Broadband staff presented an update, including: Virginia Telecommunication Initiative FY24 Proposed Guidelines and Criteria Overview, the Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment 5-Year Plan Overview, the

	Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment Volume 2 Overview, the Line Extension Customer Assistance Program Updates, and Other Updates.
Make-Ready Discussion	Jimmy Carr of All Points Broadband presented on the process and challenges of "Make-Ready" – the process of attaching to existing telephone/power poles during the process of aerial wireline broadband network construction. The presentation included an overview of the process of evaluating and gaining approval to attach to poles, and also the current challenges experienced in this process.
Public Comment	Kirk Jones, representing the Communications Workers of America, spoke to the significant workforce needs of building state and federally funded broadband networks, and called for robust workforce and labor practices. Mr. Jones distributed a handout at the meeting titled "Building Future-Proof Broadband: Best In Class Technology, Good Jobs, and Public Safety"
New Business	No new business was discussed at the meeting.
Adjournment	Upon a motion made and properly seconded, the meeting was adjourned.

Broadband Advisory Council Meeting

December 8, 2023

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
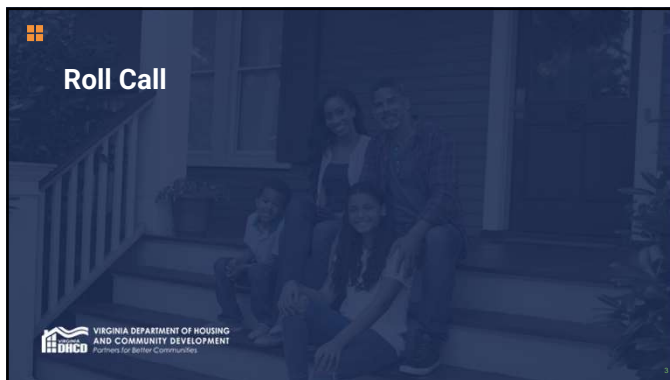*Partners for Better Communities*

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Call to Order

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
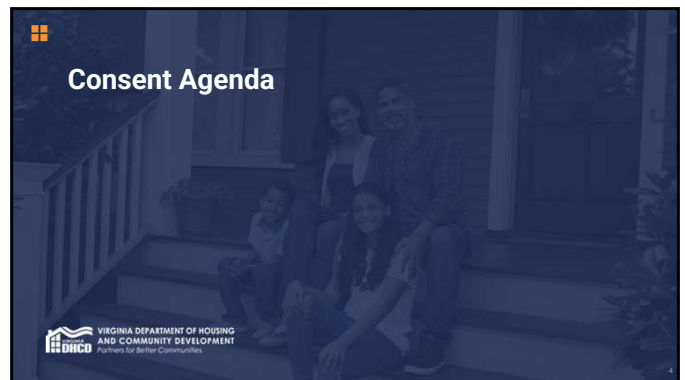*Partners for Better Communities*

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Roll Call

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Consent Agenda

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
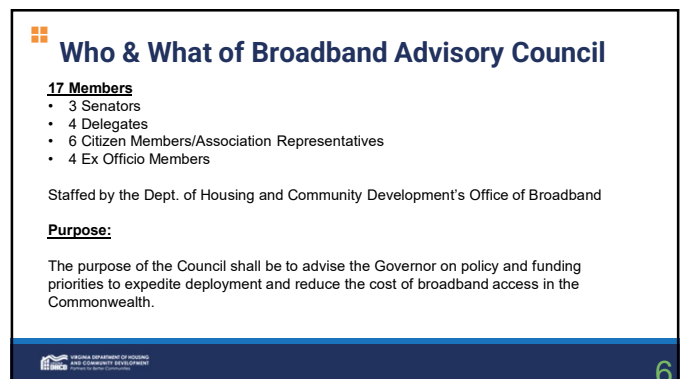*Partners for Better Communities*

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Broadband 101

Agenda:
Broadband Advisory Council: Who and What
What is "Broadband"?
Why and Where are the Unserved?
What is Virginia doing about it?
How are the existing projects performing?
What's coming next – the BEAD Program
Broadband Affordability and Adoption
Role of Legislators (Non-Legislative) & Resources

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Who & What of Broadband Advisory Council

17 Members
- 3 Senators
- 4 Delegates
- 6 Citizen Members/Association Representatives
- 4 Ex Officio Members

Staffed by the Dept. of Housing and Community Development's Office of Broadband

Purpose:

The purpose of the Council shall be to advise the Governor on policy and funding priorities to expedite deployment and reduce the cost of broadband access in the Commonwealth.

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What is "Broadband"?
What does it mean when I'm "Unserved"?

- Broadband, per Webster, is transmission of wide bandwidth data over a high-speed internet connection

- You have "broadband" if you have <u>access</u> to internet speeds at or above 100 Megabits per second download and 20 Megabits per second upload (100/20)
  - Download means receiving data
  - Upload means sending data

- A location is "unserved" if does not have the ability to <u>access</u> internet at or above 100/20 Mbps.

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What is "Broadband"?
What are all these technologies?

| Fiber | Coaxial Cable | Fixed Wireless (Licensed and Unlicensed Spectrum) |

| Copper/DSL | Satellite (Low Earth Orbit/Traditional Satellite) | **Virginia is technology neutral.** |

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What is "Broadband"?
"Last-Mile" vs. "Middle Mile"

Last-Mile
- Available to anyone along that route

Middle-Mile
- Transferring data over long distances
- Not always available along the route

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Unserved Locations – Sparsely Populated Regions

Has broadband access   Does not have broadband access
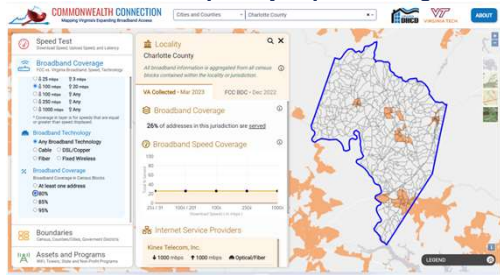
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Unserved Locations – Sparsely Populated Regions

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Unserved Locations – Line Extensions

Served Locations

Line Extension Needs

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Why do we need Broadband?

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Holistic Digital Divide

No access to broadband infrastructure

Access

Affordability

Adoption

Access to broadband, but service is unaffordable

Service exists, and is affordable, but users may not know how to fully take advantage of the service

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Broadband Access

Broadband Access: No broadband infrastructure is present to provide service to a location

Existing Resources:
- Virginia Telecommunication Initiative
- Line Extension Customer Assistance Program
- Federal Funding Programs
- Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program

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Broadband Affordability

Broadband Affordability: Access to broadband is available, but service is unaffordable

Existing Resources:
- Federal Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)
  - $30/month subsidy towards the cost of broadband or cellular services
- Many broadband providers offer a low-cost plan that is fully coverable by ACP
- Virginia is currently implementing an ACP Outreach Grant to target ACP outreach to low-enrollment Zip Codes in high-eligibility, highly-served areas.

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Broadband Adoption

Broadband Adoption: Broadband is available and affordable, but not understood or fully utilized.

Existing Resources:
- Some broadband providers offer online platforms on digital skills
- Virginia Libraries have performed digital literacy programs for years
- Digital navigator pilot programs ongoing across the state

Key Point: Broadband adoption already takes place through a number of informal channels, but could be targeted and focused
- Cooperative extension agents helping farmers access best management practices digitally, in-field
- Libraries assisting seniors access telehealth programs
- Organizations helping underserved populations create a bank account and accessing it online

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What is Virginia doing about it?

- Funding for private-public partnerships to extend infrastructure to the unserved
- Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of funded projects
- Assist communities with broadband planning to receive and implement funds
- Leverage federal grant opportunities to complement state funded efforts
- Study and propose plans/programs for broadband affordability and adoption

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Virginia Telecommunication Initiative

The Virginia Telecommunication Initiative (VATI) extends broadband service to currently unserved areas. VATI prepares communities to build, utilize, and capitalize on telecommunications infrastructure with the goal of creating strong, competitive communities.

FY2017 – FY2023
235 Applications
Over $1.2 billion requested

$935 million awarded
$1.2 billion leveraged
Over 388,000 Locations in Project Areas
87 projects awarded across 80 localities

FY2023 VATI
35 Applications from 50 localities
$302.1 million requested

$59.5 million awarded (including letter of intent)
$118.6 Million leveraged
5 Localities with No Previous VATI
27,771 connections

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VATI Project Areas, FY2021 – FY2023

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LECAP

Line Extension Customer Assistance Program (LECAP)
For a subset of Virginians, broadband connections are not attainable because their home exceeds an internet service provider's standard connection drop length from a roadway or easement containing telecommunications infrastructure. The cost incurred by homeowners to extend broadband infrastructure to these locations, referred to as special construction costs, range from a few hundred to a few thousand dollars, depending on the distance and cost to connect the location.

As of December 4th, 2023
- 608 Applications
- 221 have qualified via program income requirements
- 280 applicants have not submitted income documentation or are disqualified
- 116 of those projects are active
- 57 projects are complete
- 13 Applications denied due to income

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What has the federal government done?

- Prior federal investments in last-mile deployments
  - Connect America Fund II Auction (CAF-II)
  - Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF)
  - Alternative Connect America Model (ACAM)
  - Enhanced Alternative Connect America Model (E-ACAM)
  - U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Grants and Loans (USDA ReConnect, Community Connect)

Key Notes:
- <u>Varying levels of success</u> across these programs
- 6 to 10 Year construction timelines for projects, generally
- Federal funding connected to state projects is generally successful

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How do we keep track of Project Progress?

Reports Submitted by Awardees
- Monthly Reports
- Remittance Requests
- Closeout Report
- Post-Closeout Reports (at 6 and 12 Months)

DHCD Internal Practices
- Cost Performance Index
- Monthly Risk Assessment
- Interim Compliance Reviews
- Retainage of 10% of grant funds
- Final Compliance Review
- Final Financial Review

Cost Performance Index (CPI)
- Measure of project progress against remittance requests

Risk Assessments
- Internal meetings to cross-examine project progress and issues
- Best practices shared across projects, communicated to awardees

Compliance Reviews
- On-site review of project progress, project management and financial practices.
- Corrective actions identified and issued (if needed)
- Recipient has 30 days to resolve identified issues

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How are the Projects Going?

In VATI FY2021-2023
- 355,000+ locations announced as awarded funding. To date these projects have provided access to 76,901 locations, and counting.

FY2022 Projects
- 285,138 locations awarded. These awards have provided access to 56,890 locations, which is within 87% of projections for this timeframe.

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Current Portfolio of VATI Projects

Funding Year	Open	Construction Complete	Pre Contract	Total
2017	0	5		
2018	0	3		
2019	2	10		
2020	2	12		
2021	12	4		
2022	36	0		
2023	10	0	4	
Total	62	34	4	100

19 projects have received contract extensions. Mostly due to COVID-related delays, permitting and make ready.

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How are the Projects Going?

VATI Project Progress FY21-FY23 as of November 2023

FY2021: Constructed 20,011; Remaining 6,644
FY2022: Constructed 56,890; Remaining 228,248
FY2023: Remaining 29,426

■ Constructed ■ Remaining

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VATI Project Dashboard – See for Yourself

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VATI Project Dashboard – See for Yourself

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Other Project Performance Data

Kim McKay, House Appropriations Committee

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Relationship between VATI and the State Budget

With the availability of federal resources to aid in the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, Virginia invested significantly in the deployment of broadband infrastructure.

In FY 2021, the General Assembly invested $30 million of Coronavirus Relief Funds to support middle mile projects.

In FY 2022, the General Assembly invested the entirety of its federal Capital Project Fund Award ($222 million) and 11% of its State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund ($479 million) in supporting Virginia's goal of universal broadband access.

VATI BUDGET ALLOCATIONS OVER TIME ($ IN MILLIONS)

■ Capital Projects Fund
■ State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund
■ Coronavirus Relief Fund
■ General Fund

FY 17: $1.3; FY 18: $1.3; FY 19: $4.0; FY 20: $19.0; FY 21: $79.7; FY 22: $750.5; FY 23: $49.7; FY 24: $49.7

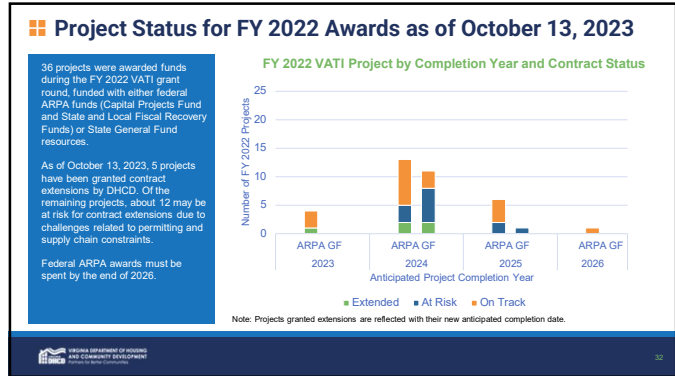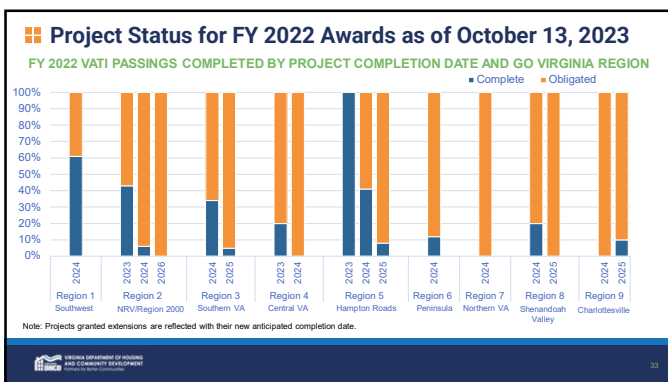VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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FY 2022 VATI grant round committeed $750.0 million to projcects

GO Virginia Region	Obligated Connections
Region 1 (Southwest)	45,414
Region 2 (NRV & Region 2000)	40,043
Region 3 (Southern VA)	61,328
Region 4 (Central VA)	10,087
Region 5 (Hampton Roads)	27,004
Region 6 (Peninsula)	3,840
Region 7 (Northern VA)	8,629
Region 8 (Shenandoah Valley)	48,299
Region 9 (Charlottesville)	40,494
TOTAL	**285,138**

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Project Status for FY 2022 Awards as of October 13, 2023

36 projects were awarded funds during the FY 2022 VATI grant round, funded with either federal ARPA funds (Capital Projects Fund and State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds) or State General Fund resources.

As of October 13, 2023, 5 projects have been granted contract extensions by DHCD. Of the remaining projects, about 12 may be at risk for contract extensions due to challenges related to permitting and supply chain constraints.

Federal ARPA awards must be spent by the end of 2026.

FY 2022 VATI Project by Completion Year and Contract Status

■ Extended ■ At Risk ■ On Track

Note: Projects granted extensions are reflected with their new anticipated completion date.

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Project Status for FY 2022 Awards as of October 13, 2023

FY 2022 VATI PASSINGS COMPLETED BY PROJECT COMPLETION DATE AND GO VIRGINIA REGION

■ Complete ■ Obligated

Note: Projects granted extensions are reflected with their new anticipated completion date.

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What are the Hurdles and Lessons Learned?

Key Challenges
- Utility Locates
- Railroad Crossings
- Make-Ready
- Supply Chain Constraints
- Labor Shortages
- Onerous Federal Program Requirements

Ongoing Resolutions
- Short- and Long-Term Construction Planning
- Application Requirements to Demonstrate Mitigation of Supply, Labor Shortages & Make Ready Challenges
- Frequent Communication from Office of Broadband with Stakeholders

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What's Coming Next – the BEAD Program

$42.5 Billion Federal Investment Nationally through Infrastructure Act

$1.48B allocation to Virginia
- DHCD and Virginia Tech increased this allocation by an estimated $250M by correcting federal map.

Reach functionally universal coverage

Invest in broadband affordability and adoption

☑ ● Unserved   ☑ ● Underserved
☑ ● Served   ☑ ⊕ Funded

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BEAD Order of Priority

- **Top Priority under BEAD:** Reach all unserved locations across the Commonwealth that can be served by cost-effective solutions.

- 162,000+ Locations preliminarily identified as unserved and not in a funded project area
  - This figure is expected to come down to ~125,000 through private sector construction and refining mapping through the BEAD Challenge Process from Sept. - Dec. 2023.
  - This process is critical to reaching universal access in the Commonwealth
  - Estimated $950M+ to serve the remaining 162k

- **Next Priority under BEAD:** If funding is available, develop and implement programs that address broadband affordability and adoption (telehealth, senior programs, smart farming, etc.)

  ** Prioritization of extending broadband infrastructure to unserved areas is a mandated priority of federal statute

Access
- Locations without a single option for broadband services

Affordability
- When broadband access is available, but the service is unaffordable

Adoption
- Utilizing service once its available – online job applications to telehealth

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BEAD 5-Year Plan Goals and Objectives

- *Goal: __Invest BEAD funding__ to achieve functionally universal broadband access, __by the end of 2024 to all unserved and underserved locations in the Commonwealth__ that lack a funded solution for broadband access.*
  - *Objective: Continue to work with local government and internet service providers to plan shovel-ready, universal broadband projects ready for funding*
  - *Objective: Remove the barrier of special construction costs for broadband access to locations through line extension programs.*
- *Goal: __Complete construction of BEAD funded projects by 2027-2028__.*
  - *Objective: Support development of broadband and other industry -related workforce to meet the ongoing construction and long-term operation and maintenance needs of broadband networks and associated infrastructure.*

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BEAD 5-Year Plan Goals and Objectives

- *Goal: To the extent funding is available, promote federal resources for broadband affordability by __increasing ACP utilization by more than 5%__ through existing and future efforts.*
  - *Objective: Fully utilize the Affordable Connectivity Program to lower the cost of broadband services for those that need it most.*
- *Goal: To the extent funding is available, conduct state-wide needs assessments and __develop programs to reach full broadband adoption__.*
  - *Objective: Development and implement programs that support smart farming, building a business online, and telehealth, among others*
  - *Objective: Support sustainable, long-term programs to provide devices, including computers and tablets, to those in need*
  - *Objective: Develop and promote digital literacy and navigator programs in partnership with multiple institutions across the Commonwealth*

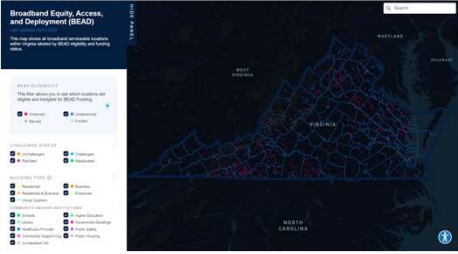VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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BEAD Challenge Process

Purpose of identifying all unfunded, unserved and underserved remaining

162,000 locations initially identified

266,000+ challenges received
- Multiple challenges per location
- Entering the 'rebuttal' phase

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Constituent Inquiries and Messages

"My location is included in a project, why hasn't it been built out yet"

"Cable was installed on my road 3 months ago and I haven't gotten service yet"

"I can't get broadband access because of an easement dispute"

"My broadband provider is sending me a bill for thousands of dollars to be connected"

"What are you doing about cellular coverage in my area?"

"The state's been saying a lot about broadband, what's actually going on"

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Constituent Inquiries and Messages

Constituent Responses – Best Practices

- A constituent's full address is required to check if a project is in their area

- Reminder that government-funded infrastructure projects are not built overnight

- Several key resources to share:
  - Broadband Project Dashboard
  - Commonwealth-Connection Broadband Availability Map
  - Federal Communication Commission National Broadband Map
  - Line Extension Customer Assistance Program (for high quotes to connect)

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Virginia Digital Opportunity Plan Overview

- A projected ~$500M under BEAD will be remaining in non-deployment funds to invest in these areas
- Opportunities for Virginia under the Digital Opportunity Plan include:
  - Digital Literacy through Library Programs
  - Digital Skills Programs in Education (K-12 and Adult)
  - Smart Farming & Telehealth Applications
  - Many More!
- Virginia's Digital Opportunity Plan has been released for public comment
- Please review to help craft programs to address broadband affordability and adoption needs!

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Across the Country, States are developing unique programs to address their own digital divide; as a national leader in internet and digital access, Virginia can continue to launch innovative efforts

Digital Literacy — Colorado's Broadband Council created a **Subcommittee on Digital Literacy and Inclusion (SDLI)** to research and analyze digital literacy. The SDLI is supported by Working Groups focused on Policy, Data, and Promising Practices.

Partnerships — In Philadelphia, Temple University partnered with the PA Digital Transformation and eCommerce Program to provide **specialized eCommerce services** (e.g., digital literacy, cybersecurity, web development) to Philadelphia's small business community.

Affordability — In North Carolina, the State Broadband Office collaborates with NC State University to provide **rapid, mini-grants** to communities that are used to fund local digital equity projects (e.g., internet access, devices, skill trainings, and more).
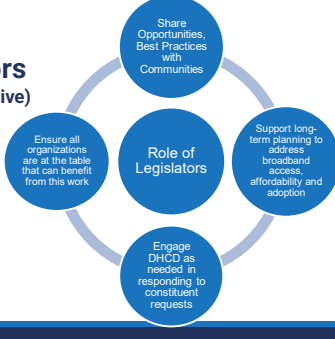
Sustainable Funding — Since 2016, the City of Boston has provided **$1M in annual City funding** to Tech Goes Home, a nonprofit that helps Bostonians learn digital skills, secure devices, and access the internet, as well as customized programs for small businesses in Boston.
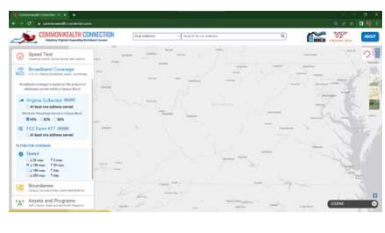
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Role of Legislators (Non-Legislative)

- Share Opportunities, Best Practices with Communities
- Support long-term planning to address broadband access, affordability and adoption
- Engage DHCD as needed in responding to constituent requests
- Ensure all organizations are at the table that can benefit from this work
- Role of Legislators

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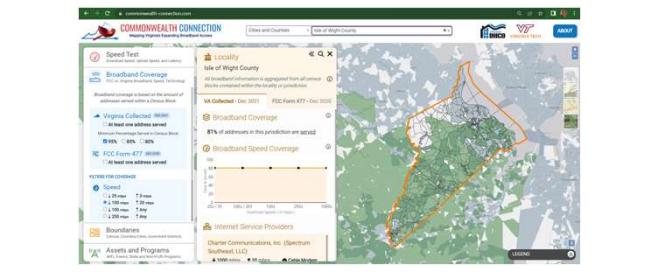**Commonwealth Connection – Broadband Availability Map**

- Established through 2021 Budget Bill
  - Update coming January 2023
- Maps broadband availability by technology type, percent of availability by census block
- Resource for residents and stakeholders to understand current coverage, unserved areas

Available at: commonwealth-connection.com

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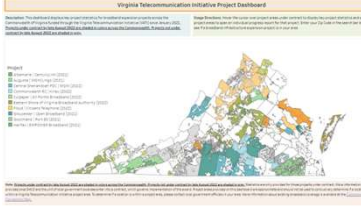**Commonwealth Connection – Broadband Availability Map**

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Virginia Telecommunication Initiative Project Dashboard

- Established through H.B. 7001 from the 2021 General Assembly Special Session II and continued through the 2022 Budget Bill
- Includes Virginia Telecommunications Initiative Projects announced since January 2021 (FY21 and FY22 award rounds)
- Resource for residents and stakeholders to stay informed of project progress in their area

Available at: dhcd.virginia.gov/vati
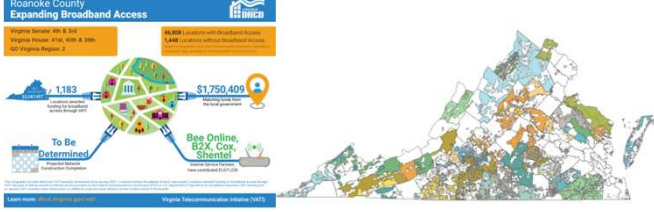
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County & City Broadband Profiles

- County and City Broadband Profiles are Now Published
- Broadband Dashboard is up to Date with FY23 Project Areas Displayed

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Summary

- Virginia remains on track to be the first large state to achieve universal broadband access
- Office of Broadband staff are working to streamline project delivery and promote transparency on project progress
- The upcoming BEAD program presents the opportunity to achieve universal broadband access and invest in broadband affordability and adoption
- Legislators, in a non-legislative role, can be most helpful by promoting planning, as well as sharing opportunities and best practices with localities

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Questions and Answers

Discussion

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Virginia Telecommunication Initiative Project Construction Update

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Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program Update

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BEAD Update

- First phase of the Challenge Process Complete – 266,000+ challenges received
  - Critical to identify as many as possible unserved and underserved locations
  - Equally important to clear off all locations which already have access from the map
- Ongoing review and editing of Volume 2 per NTIA's requested edits
  - Volume 2 outlines the BEAD application process, scoring, and grantee requirements
- Office of Broadband will publish a breakdown of federal requirements of BEAD for all grantees to begin preparing
- Application window anticipated to begin in early March
  - Pending federal approval of Volume 2
  - Pending completion of the BEAD challenge process, slated for late February

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Virginia Digital Opportunity Plan Overview

Agenda:
What is the federal Digital Equity Act?
What is Virginia Doing?
Digital Opportunity Plan Outline
Survey, Planning Programs, Stakeholder Engagement
Key Themes & Goals
Public Comment Period

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Digital Equity Act Overview

Signed into law under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, the Digital Equity Act (DEA) provides funding for States to identify and address digital opportunity needs for their residents

What Exactly Is Digital Opportunity?

The National Telecommunications and Information Agency (NTIA) has identified 3 key pillars that underpin digital opportunity:

- Accessible, Affordable Internet
- Digital Skills
- Access to Connected Devices

What Does the DEA Do?

The DEA allocates $2.75 Billion to establish three main grant programs:

1. State Digital Equity Planning Grant | $60 Million
Formula Grant for States to develop Digital Opportunity Plans

2. State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program | $1.44 Billion
Formula Grant for States to implement Digital Opportunity Plans

3. Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program | $1.25 Billion
Competitive Grant for other entities to advance digital equity

How Will Digital Opportunity Funds be Used?

While official guidance is forthcoming, it is expected that the State Digital Capacity Grant Program could be used to support range of programs:

- Digital literacy training
- Small business support
- Digital navigator programs
- Streamlining digital services
- Device lending programs
- Promoting existing resources

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Digital Equity Act: Covered Populations

Covered Populations

- Individuals living in households below 150% of the federal poverty level;
- Aging individuals;
- Incarcerated individuals, other than individuals who are incarcerated in a Federal correctional facility;
- Veterans;
- Individuals with disabilities;
- Individuals with a language barrier, including individuals who—
  - Are English learners; and
  - Have low levels of literacy
- Individuals who are members of a racial or ethnic minority group; and
- Individuals who primarily reside in a rural area

81.1% of Virginians are amongst covered populations.

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State Planning Grant Program: Regional Digital Opportunity Plans & Other Activities

- DHCD sub-awarded Grant funds to CAAs for the development of Regional Digital Opportunity Plans - CAAs:
  - Engaged with local **stakeholders**,
  - Conducted **needs assessments**
  - Deployed **Virginia Digital Opportunity Survey**
  - **Identified D.O. barriers** in their region
  - **Developed solutions** for covered populations.

- Takeaways from Regional Digital Opportunity Plans have informed the recommendations of our Commonwealth Digital Opportunity Plan and will be used to access implementation grant funding.

Key Activities and Outcomes for Regional Digital Opportunity Plans
- Recommended Actions
- Regional Digital Opportunity Plans
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Assessment of Needs

Development Timeline for Regional Digital Opportunity Plans

Nov 2022	Dec 2022	Jan 2023	Feb-Aug 2023
Planning Opportunity Letter of Interest Window Opens	Letter of Interest Due Full Applications Published	Application Deadline Partnerships Formed	Regional Plans Developed

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Digital Opportunity Survey Findings

1. 2 out of 5 respondents **access the internet using their cellular data plan**. Roughly one-third (31%) of respondents use cable modem.

2. Of the people who cannot access the internet, 45% **do not because it is not available in their area**. Another 29% say it's **too expensive**.

3. **51% of respondents are unwilling to pay more** for better internet service. One-quarter of respondents (26%) are unsure.

4. Respondents are **comfortable doing most tasks** on the internet, but **less so attending doctor's appointments**.

5. Most respondents **(81%) have not applied to a program for internet accessibility**, and only one-third (30%) are **aware** of these programs.

6. The most common problems among respondents are their **subscribed speeds not being achievable (20%)** and a lack of access to technology (19%).

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Digital Opportunity Survey Findings – cont.

Respondent CAA Region	Respondent Affordability Considerations
CAPSAW	40% identify cost as the greatest barrier to an internet subscription
SERCAP	45% spend between $50 and $100 each month on internet alone
People, Inc. NOVA	38% spend between $50 and $100 each month on their internet service; however, 24% spend over $125 per month
HRCAP	While respondents overwhelmingly expressed interest in the ability to access low-cost or free internet services / digital devices, over 81% have not applied to a subsidy program such as the ACP
WJCC Region	48% spend between $50 and $100 each month on internet service
People, Inc. SWVA	37% identify cost as the greatest barrier to an internet subscription
Bay Aging	Over 70% of respondents are either unwilling or unsure about paying more for better internet service
CAPUP	56% would not be willing to pay more for better internet service
Improvement Association	While 38% were unwilling to pay more for improved service, 63% of all respondents were unaware of existing subsidy programs
Other (Non-CAA Region)	41% spend between $50 and $100 each month on internet service

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Case Study Pilot Program

LITERACY FOR LIFE - AN ADULT LITERACY NONPROFIT BASED IN WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA, DEVELOPED A PROGRAM TO **ASSESS THE DIGITAL LITERACY SKILLS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH A LANGUAGE BARRIER** AND DETERMINE EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THESE SKILLS. LITERACY FOR LIFE FOUND THAT WHILE INITIALLY PARTICIPANTS TENDED TO SELF-REPORT CONFIDENCE IN HANDLING DIGITAL TASKS, THIS WAS LARGELY NOT SUPPORTED BY THE RESULTS OF THE ASSESSMENT.

EDU-FUTURO – AN LATINX FOUNDED ORGANIZATION FROM 1998 THAT **DEVELOPED TECH FOR PARENTS, WHICH IS A PRIMARY DIGITAL LITERACY CURRICULUM**, SKILLING INDIVIDUALS IN THE BASICS OF COMPUTER USE AND GENERAL DIGITAL TASKS. EDU-FUTURO'S CASE STUDY PRESENTS PARTICIPANT APTITUDE SCORES PRIOR TO PARTICIPATING IN THE PROGRAM AND AFTER, WHICH DEMONSTRATE CONSISTENT IMPROVEMENT IN PARTICIPANTS' ABILITY TO HANDLE BASIC DIGITAL TASKS.

SMYTH COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY - A CASE STUDY FOR THE ORGANIZATION'S **DIGITAL NAVIGATOR PROGRAM**, THROUGH WHICH THE LIBRARY SOUGHT TO OFFER 1 ON 1 TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO SMYTH COUNTY RESIDENTS TO ASSIST WITH IDENTIFYING AFFORDABLE INTERNET PLANS, MITIGATE DIGITAL LITERACY BURDENS, AND ADDRESS OTHER ELEMENTS OF THE DIGITAL DIVIDE.

TRI-AREA COMMUNITY HEALTH (TACH) - A FEDERALLY FUNDED COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER LOCATED HEADQUARTERED IN CARROLL COUNTY, VIRGINIA AND RECEIVED A GRANT TO DEVELOP A CASE STUDY REGARDING THE ORGANIZATION'S **VIRTUAL CARE OPTIMIZATION INITIATIVE** DEVELOPED FOLLOWING THE PANDEMIC. TRI-AREA PRESENTS A FRAMEWORK FOR DELIVERING VIRTUAL CARE, DEVELOPED FOLLOWING A MAJOR TRANSITION TO RELIANCE ON VIRTUAL VISITS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

VIRGINIA COMMUNITY ACTION PARTNERSHIP (VACAP) - A STATEWIDE MEMBERSHIP ASSOCIATION THAT REPRESENTS THIRTY-ONE COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCIES ACROSS THE COMMONWEALTH THAT **RECEIVED A CASE STUDY GRANT TO PILOT ITS BROADBAND PEER GROUP** THAT BROUGHT TOGETHER MEMBERS TO DISCUSS REGIONAL PROGRESS ON ASSESSING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE AND PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS THE REGIONAL AND STATEWIDE GAPS IN DIGITAL OPPORTUNITY.

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Regional Digital Opportunity Program

The Regional Digital Opportunity Program aimed to ensure that the unique needs of different regions and populations across the Commonwealth were considered as a part of this plan.

As part of this initiative, Virginia was organized into nine (9) regions and eight (8) Community Action Agency partners were contracted to develop their Regional Digital Opportunity Plans (RDOPs).

Virginia Digital Opportunity Plan
Regional Digital Opportunity Plans with Community Action Agencies

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Regional Digital Opportunity Plans - CAAs

SOUTHEAST REGION COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM (SERCAP)

HAMPTON ROADS COMMUNITY ACTION PARTNERSHIP (HRCAP/

COMMUNITY ACTION PARTNERSHIP OF STAUNTON, AUGUSTA, AND WAYNESBORO (CAPSAW)

PEOPLE INCORPORATED (NORTH CENTRAL & SOUTHWEST)

IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

COMMUNITY ACTION PARTNERSHIP UPLIFTING THE PEOPLE (CAPUP)

BAY AGING/EASTERN SHORE

WILLIAMSBURG JAMES CITY COUNTY COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY (WJCCCAA)

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Stakeholder Engagement

The Commonwealth of Virginia has been at the forefront of efforts to bridge the digital divide through the State Digital Equity Act Planning Grant Program and the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program. Recognizing the importance of ensuring adequate access to digital technologies, the state has undertaken extensive collaboration and community engagement efforts to gather valuable insights from our stakeholders in which we serve. Virginia conducted a community engagement and outreach strategy comprised of four key components:

1. **Conducting 1:1 stakeholder interviews.**
2. **Community input sessions.**
3. **Conducting broadband centric focus groups; and**
4. **Public Comment – closing Dec. 29th**

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Virginia Digital Opportunity Plan- Key Themes

Key Themes in the findings for Virginia's Digital Opportunity Plan includes:

- Sustainment & Sustainability
- Focused Resources for Covered Populations
- Partnerships & Collaboration
- Awareness of Resources
- Capacity Building

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Digital Opportunity Plan – Goals & Objectives

Goal: Increase awareness of federal resources and other available broadband resources.

Goal: Strengthen organizational capacity to enhance community efforts to address the barriers and needs of digital opportunity.

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What are the Challenges and Lessons Learned?

Key Challenges
- Community & Tribal Engagement
- Lack of Knowledge/ Importance
- Organizational Capacity

Ongoing Resolutions
- Continued Digital Opportunity Planning Activities & Implementation
- Collaborations & Partnerships prioritizing Outreach and Awareness
- Investment in Sustainable Digital Literacy & Skills Programs
- Support programs offering Technical Assistance & Digital Navigation

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Digital Opportunity Plan Update

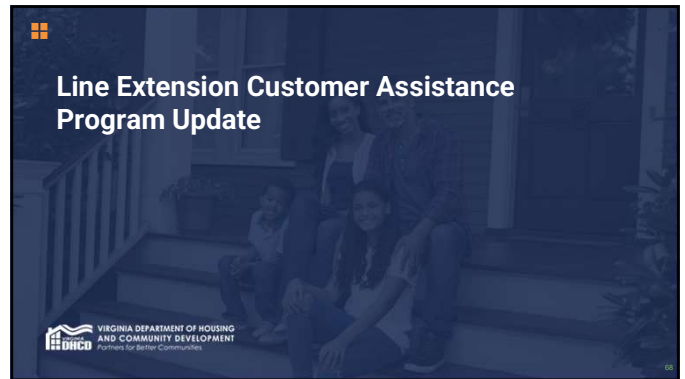Virginia Digital Opportunity Plan

- Virginia's Digital Opportunity Plan has been released for public comment!
- Public Comment Period: November 29th – December 29th, 2023
- Following Public Comment, DHCD will submit the Final Plan to NTIA and publish the Virginia Digital Opportunity Plan.
- Please review to help craft programs to address broadband affordability and adoption needs!
- Click Here to review the Virginia Digital Opportunity Plan!

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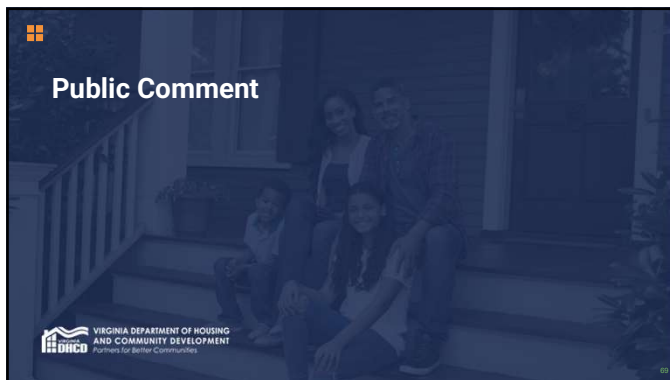*Partners for Better Communities.*

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Line Extension Customer Assistance Program Update

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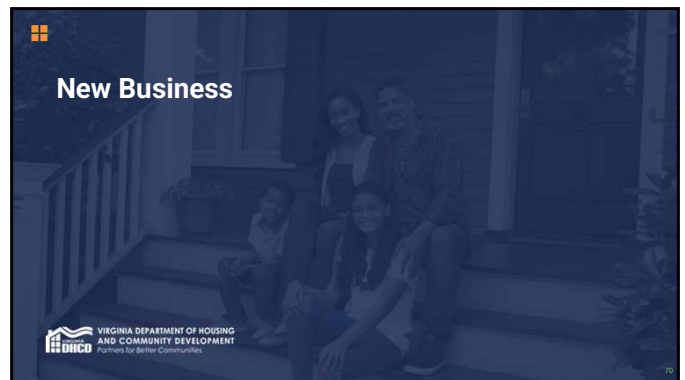*Partners for Better Communities.*

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Public Comment

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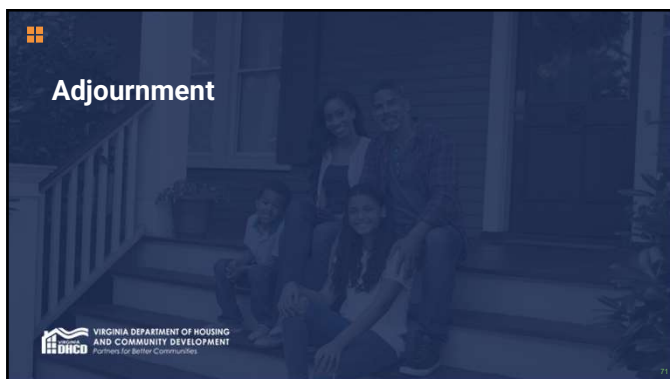*Partners for Better Communities.*

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New Business

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Adjournment

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