

January 6, 2021

Commonwealth Connect Coalition Members,

2020 was a tough year for everyone, especially the unconnected. Yet the broadband community met these historic challenges with historic action and investment. As we turn the page on the calendar (thankfully), I wanted to briefly reflect on some of the key achievements in broadband from 2020.

Pandemic Response

- [\\$30 million in CARES Act](#) broadband funding awarded to 71 projects connecting 30,822 locations
- [\\$18.9 million in CARES Act](#) funding awarded to school divisions for remote learning and improved connectivity
- [Interactive statewide map](#) of more than 1,200 public Wifi Hotspots

Virginia Telecommunication Initiative (VATI)

- [FY20 VATI Awards](#) - \$18.3 million awarded to 12 projects connecting over 36,000 locations.
- [FY21 VATI budget](#) was increased during the special General Assembly session from \$35 million to \$50 million. FY21 awards will be announced soon.
- [Governor Northam's introduced budget](#) included \$50 million for the FY22 VATI round.

New Policies to Facilitate Deployment

- Governor Northam signed [HB 831](#) into law, streamlining the process by which broadband providers can deploy broadband under apportionable electric easements.
- Governor Northam also signed [HB 1675](#) into law, allowing localities to use revenue from solar developments for broadband deployment.

Media Highlights

- [Fast-Tracking internet access - Virginia leads the way](#)
- [Virginia is committed to investing in long overdue broadband infrastructure](#)
- [There's the urgency we've been looking for on broadband](#)
- [Moving forward together: Supporting state and local broadband leadership](#)

We have a lot of exciting things on tap for 2021, first of which is \$50 million in VATI awards to be announced soon. Looking forward to our continued work with local leaders, broadband providers, and coalition members to make universal broadband in the Commonwealth a reality.