

ROBERT J. WITTMAN

1ST DISTRICT, VIRGINIA



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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

October 15, 2021

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Tamarah Holmes, Ph.D.
Director, Office of Broadband
Department of Housing and Community Development
600 East Main Street, Suite 300
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Director Holmes:

I am writing in support of the New Kent County FY 2022 Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development Virginia Telecommunication Initiative (VATI) grant application to expand high-speed broadband availability in the First Congressional District through a partnership with RiverStreet Networks. Approval of this application would help meet the critical need to buildout high-speed broadband service to residents of New Kent County.

Rural residents in Virginia's First Congressional District appreciate the value of high-speed broadband access. Providing reliable broadband access is vital for commercial stability, job creation, distance learning, and telehealth service expansion. Throughout the First Congressional District of Virginia, as in other largely rural areas, economic incentives are needed to expand broadband access, and the VATI program has been a successful vehicle of meeting that need. VATI encourages private telecommunications providers to enlarge their coverage and gives localities the ability to design the expansion that is right for their communities. This eases the financial burden associated with construction costs, broadens service, and creates a successful public-private partnership (P3) for the awardees and for the Commonwealth.

New Kent County and their key partner RiverStreet Networks seek this VATI grant to move them closer to universal broadband coverage. Together they are planning to build out approximately 200 miles of fiber to pass 1,272 locations. The current cost estimate is \$9,768,000 for the construction; with \$5,992,696 of the total cost coming from the County and RiverStreet Networks. This non-state match shows a commitment from all involved to provide the services needed. This proposed application will increase educational opportunities and economic growth in the county.

Thank you for your consideration of the New Kent County application. Moreover, if you have any concerns or questions, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert J. Wittman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Robert J. Wittman
Member of Congress