



News from **Congressman Rick Boucher**

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BOUCHER SECURES \$22.7 MILLION FOR BRISTOL VIRGINIA UTILITIES FOR MAJOR EXPANSION OF BROADBAND SERVICES

Federal Grant Will Enable Installation of 388 Miles of Fiber Optic Cable in Bland, Buchanan, Dickenson, Russell, Smyth, Washington and Wythe Counties

(Washington, D.C.) – U.S. Representative Rick Boucher announced today that, at his urging, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, through its Recovery Act broadband grant program is providing a federal grant of \$22,698,010 to Bristol Virginia Utilities (BVU) for a major expansion of its broadband network.

“The federal funds will enable the construction of a middle-mile fiber optic network 388 miles in length throughout Bland, Buchanan, Dickenson, Russell, Smyth, Washington and Wythe Counties. The project aims to spur new connections and improve high-speed Internet access services for thousands of homes and hundreds of businesses, schools and other community institutions,” Boucher said.

With the benefit of the federal funds, BVU will add 388 miles of fiber to its current fiber optic network, which today includes 900 miles of fiber optic cable. The new middle-mile network will bring broadband service near 120 educational institutions and community organizations and within 2 miles of more than 18,000 homes and more than 500 businesses.

The total cost of constructing the new middle-mile network is \$36,220,536. In addition to the nearly \$22.7 million in federal funds, the Virginia Tobacco Commission is providing \$5,659,503, and VDOT and BVU have provided a total of \$7,863,023 in in-kind services including right-of-way and existing fibers and electronics needed to transport traffic between the new areas and BVU.

“With the middle-mile fiber optic network in place, it will be possible to provide last-mile connections to provide high-speed Internet access services to thousands of homes and businesses that do not have broadband today,” Boucher said.

It is projected that 295 direct jobs will be created in the areas of construction, engineering, inspection and project management in establishing the middle-mile network.

“Access to high-speed Internet services is critical to achieving our economic development goals for the region. Fiber optic infrastructure makes us more attractive to companies seeking to expand operations and provides new opportunities for local entrepreneurs to telecommute or expand their businesses online.

“Our work to build Southwest Virginia’s broadband infrastructure has borne fruit. For example in the Spring, I announced that DIRECTV would locate a virtual call center in our region as a result of the region’s extensive broadband network, and that center now employs 137 Southwest Virginia residents. The federal funds announced today represent another significant step forward in advancing our economic development opportunities,” Boucher concluded.

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