



For Immediate Release

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Louisa County, Rappahannock Electric Cooperative, Firefly Fiber Broadband, and Dominion Energy Proposed Partnership to Bring Broadband to Louisa County

Louisa, Va. – Efforts to provide broadband internet service in Louisa County took a leap forward when officials announced today a recently proposed partnership with the energy utilities serving the community. Bob Babyok, Chairman of the Louisa County Board of Supervisors, announced that Louisa County is finalizing a partnership with Rappahannock Electric Cooperative (REC), Firefly Fiber BroadbandSM, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Central Virginia Electric Cooperative, and Dominion Energy Virginia to ensure high-speed internet access is available to all of the homes and businesses in the County.

The partnership includes a significant capital investment from all parties to ensure its success. In September 2020, the Louisa County Board of Supervisors unanimously earmarked \$15 million to incentivize the deployment of end-user fiber on a countywide basis. The funds will be used to prepare for construction and offset other project-related costs. Serving as the cornerstone of the proposed partnership, REC will own the fiber network constructed in the majority of the county, and is providing use of its infrastructure, including poles, to make the Louisa County broadband initiative a reality. Initial phases of the project are slated for early 2021.

Firefly will be the internet service provider for the partnership and will ensure the availability of fiber broadband on a county-wide basis. Firefly will oversee construction of the REC-owned fiber in the REC service territory and then be responsible for network operation and fiber maintenance. As it moves forward with efforts to modernize Virginia's energy grid, Dominion Energy is working to provide "middle-mile" fiber optic cable infrastructure that can also be used to bridge the digital gap and reduce broadband deployment costs in Louisa County. Firefly will lease the "middle-mile" fiber installed by Dominion Energy in the company's electric service area in Louisa County.

"This historic partnership is a long-awaited and extraordinary benefit for Louisa's citizens," said Duane Adams, Louisa Board Vice Chairman and Board representative to the Louisa Broadband Authority. "Fiber-based broadband will bring improved education tools, new job opportunities, access to telemedicine, and the potential to attract new businesses. We want every resident and business to have access to reliable, quality internet, and today is the day that the bridge over the digital divide in Louisa County begins to take shape."

Under the agreement, the parties will undertake a phased approach that will result in a petition to the State Corporation Commission for regulatory approval later in 2021. The first step in this partnership will be to complete engineering studies to determine the most efficient deployment plan and finalize funding requirements. It is estimated that 50% of the County will have access by the end of 2023, 75% by the end of 2024. Project completion is slated by the

end of 2025.

For more information about the fiber construction project, frequently asked questions, and a map of the project area, visit www.fireflyva.com/partners.

“Since Firefly was established, providing a desperately needed service to unserved and underserved areas of Central Virginia has been our primary objective,” added Gary Wood, president and CEO of CVEC and Firefly. “This partnership approach developed with Louisa County assures every home and business gets world class broadband access, and the approach developed here can be replicated in other localities.”

“REC is excited to be part of the solution, especially within our 22-county service area,” added John Hewa, president and CEO of REC. “We are very proud of this partnership with Louisa County, Firefly, and Dominion Energy, and even more proud to be a critical part of the efforts to bring high speed internet to our member-owners.”

“Broadband access supports education, equity, and economic development initiatives and is more important than ever,” said Ed Baine, president of Dominion Energy Virginia. “We’re proud to work with our partners in Louisa County to be part of the solution and help bring this critical resource to the communities we serve.”

About Firefly Fiber Broadband

Headquartered in Palmyra, VA, Firefly Fiber BroadbandSM is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Central Virginia Electric Cooperative. Firefly offers lightning-fast internet via fiber to the premise that is reliable and priced fairly with no hidden equipment costs or price increases. Firefly has no contracts, no data caps or slowdowns and offers symmetrical upload and download speeds. Firefly Light offers 100 mbps for \$49.99; Firefly Flash offers 1 gbps for \$79.99; and Firefly Voice is \$35.99 with a \$5.00 discount when bundled with the internet. For more information, visit www.fireflyva.com

About Rappahannock Electric Cooperative

REC provides electric service to over [170,000 connections in parts of 22 Virginia counties](#). With its general office in Fredericksburg, Va., the Cooperative operates and maintains more than 17,000 miles of power lines through its service area, which ranges from the Blue Ridge Mountains to the tidal waters of the Chesapeake Bay. For more information about REC, please visit www.myrec.coop. Follow REC on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube.

About Dominion Energy

More than [7 million customers in 16 states](#) energize their homes and businesses with electricity or natural gas from Dominion Energy (NYSE: [D](#)), headquartered in Richmond, Va. The company is [committed to sustainable, reliable, affordable and safe energy](#) and to achieving net zero carbon dioxide and methane emissions from its power generation and gas infrastructure operations by 2050. Please visit DominionEnergy.com to learn more.

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Firefly Fiber Broadband: Melissa Gay, Communications and Member Services Manager, 434-263-7638, mgay@mycvec.com

Dominion Energy: Sarah Marshall, External Affairs Manager, 804-461-8642,
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Frequently Asked Questions

Louisa County is pleased to announce a proposed partnership with [Rappahannock Electric Cooperative](#) (REC), [Firefly Fiber BroadbandSM](#), a wholly-owned subsidiary of Central Virginia Electric Cooperative (CVEC), and [Dominion Energy Virginia](#) to bring end-user fiber on a countywide basis to Louisa. Bringing broadband to rural areas is an ongoing challenge across the nation, and several factors have led to Louisa's position at the front of this critical effort. First, the County's stated willingness to consider up to \$15M in incentives was a major catalyst. Second, given the County's desire for a countywide (fiber to all end users in the County) solution, a shared effort among multiple partners was necessary, so the County is leveraging willing partners in its electric service providers. Finally, the General Assembly's approval of legislation related to rural broadband has played a critical role. Further detail is included in the Frequently Asked Questions below.

- **Will everyone in the County be served?**
 - Yes, the proposal ensures end-user access to broadband speeds via a fiber internet connection that will be deployed on a countywide basis.

- **What's the timeline for deployment?**
 - The parties will undertake a phased approach that will result in a petition to the State Corporation Commission for regulatory approval later in 2021. The first step will be to complete engineering studies to determine the most efficient deployment plan and finalize funding requirements. It is estimated that 50% of the County will have access by the end of 2023, 75% by the end of 2024. The project completion is slated by the end of 2025.

- **How will the effort be funded?**
 - Funding is coming from several sources. Firefly participated and received federal funding for fiber deployment in Louisa through the [Rural Digital Opportunity Fund](#) totaling roughly \$6.9M over the next 10 years. The partners will also leverage future funding through the Virginia Telecommunications Initiative (VATI) and other grant and funding sources. Finally, the County earmarked \$15 million to incentivize the deployment of end-user fiber on a countywide basis. The funds will be used to prepare for construction and offset other project-related costs.

- **Why are public dollars being spent on this project?**
 - Broadband deployment in rural areas has been an ongoing challenge across the nation. The most successful approach to this problem has involved leveraging partnerships and combining sources of funding to ensure financial viability where otherwise such might not exist.

- **Will this make my electric bill go up?**
 - Under Virginia law, electric utility rates and bill payments cannot be used to subsidize broadband deployment.
- **Why use electric utilities?**
 - These utilities typically already have infrastructure to every end user in the County. It is much more cost effective to use existing infrastructure.
- **Will the fiber be above ground or below?**
 - It may be either, depending on existing infrastructure.
- **What will the plans cost?**
 - Firefly intends to charge their current rates. Firefly Light offers 100 mbps for \$49.99; Firefly Flash offers 1 gbps for \$79.99; and Firefly Voice is \$35.99 with a \$5 discount when bundled with the internet. For more information, visit www.fireflyva.com.
- **Will there be any data caps, contracts or installation fees?**
 - No. Firefly does not impose data caps, require contracts or charge an installation fee for customers who pre-register for service while fiber is being built in their area.
- **I have a long driveway. Will there be additional fees to install fiber to my property?**
 - These details are still being discussed and additional details will be provided once they are finalized.
- **Will equipment be provided?**
 - Firefly will provide the equipment needed for wireless internet in the home at no additional charge. The router provides a dual band Wi-Fi and maximum available bandwidth, with remote troubleshooting and upgrade capability. No lags and mesh technology ensures strong signal no matter where you are at home.
- **Who will provide and bill for the service?**
 - Firefly will provide the connection, support and billing for the service.
- **What if I'm in an area that already has a fiber provider?**
 - [The](#) goal of the partnership is to ensure that all of the homes and businesses in the county have access to fiber broadband service.
- **Will you construct the fiber network utilizing existing easements and utility rights of way?**
 - Those in the partnership will work cooperatively with landowners and customers to obtain the rights needed to complete this project. We will be sensitive to landowner concerns and will work within existing easements and rights of way. If someone is adamantly opposed to this effort, our intention is to find an alternate route as opposed to paying for new easements. This could cause delays to the

project for everyone.

- **Where will the service be deployed first?**
 - These details are still being discussed and additional details will be provided once they are finalized. However, deployment will branch outward from existing fiber connections and will be organized to maximize the efficiency of the total buildout.
- **When will I know service is available in my area?**
 - Once the schedule is finalized, customers will be notified by mail so they are aware of the timeline for the fiber build and when to sign up for service. Customers will receive notification from Firefly when it is time to pre-register for service.
- **If it's done in phases, how soon will the first residents benefit from this partnership?**
 - CVEC, the parent company of Firefly, will continue its fiber build this year in Louisa, doubling the number of locations in the county. Work will begin to make the infrastructure ready in a pilot area of REC territory later this year, while the study for the rest of the county is being completed. The first connects in this pilot area will likely occur next year.
- **The County has constructed some existing fiber. Will that be used?**
 - The partners are assessing the potential of using these and any other existing assets to maximize deployment efficiency.
- **Why does it take so long?**
 - Several factors contribute to the timeline for overall deployment. A primary consideration that increases both time and cost are efforts to make the system ready for construction. These involve preparing existing power infrastructure to be able to carry additional lines in a manner that is safe to those around the infrastructure and which can efficiently accommodate any future repairs. The height of some power poles, for example, may need to be increased by replacing the poles. This allows fiber to be hung at a safe height below the power lines in order to accommodate repairs and necessary ground clearance. The fiber construction processes in each area can take anywhere from 12 to 18 months.
- **Why fiber and not other technologies?**
 - Fiber represents a county-wide, cost-effective solution. Extensive studies indicate that fiber technology will be superior to other technologies both now and into the future. Fiber also offers an extremely high degree of reliability compared to alternatives.
- **My locality is interested in participating in a partnership like this. Who should I contact?**
 - Please contact any of the partners for further details.

- **I have more questions, who do I contact?**
 - For questions about internet service, speeds or pricing:
 - Firefly Fiber Broadband, www.fireflyva.com or 833-473-3591
 - For other localities, internet service providers or other third-parties interested in partnerships:
 - Rappahannock Electric Cooperative, Mark Ponton, Director of Broadband and Fiber Services mponton@myrec.coop
 - Dominion Energy Virginia, RuralBroadband@DominionEnergy.com
 - County of Louisa, Christian Goodwin, County Administrator, cgoodwin@louisa.org