



News Release

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CONTACT: [Vivian Laxton](#)
Communications Director, 301-600-1315

Frederick County Receives Grant for Rural Broadband Pilot Program

Public-Private Partnership to Expand Service into Rocky Ridge

FREDERICK, Md. – Frederick County has been awarded a \$202,012 grant from the State of Maryland Rural Broadband Office which will be used to expand broadband capabilities into a portion of the Rocky Ridge community, County Executive Jan Gardner announced today. The pilot program is part of a larger strategic plan being developed to ensure more residents can connect to fast and reliable internet service. Access to broadband is vital for most residents. The service is necessary for many job applications, teleworking, online education, shopping, and staying connected to family and friends. A comprehensive Rural Broadband Study conducted in 2020 for Frederick County found that thousands of residents have no access to broadband service, and many more are underserved with slow or spotty connectivity.

“We know that bringing connectivity to unserved and underserved areas of the county supports our economy, and allows work and education to happen anywhere, anytime,” Executive Gardner said. “The pilot program in Rocky Ridge is a small step. We know it will take a combination of approaches over several years to close the digital divide in our community.”

The grant Frederick County received is to support the expansion of broadband into rural areas in coordination with a private internet service provider. Comcast, which maintains an extensive network in more densely populated areas of the county, agreed to partner on the pilot project. Details of the project will be determined in the coming weeks, including the route of the network. Individual property owners along the route will choose whether to connect their properties to Comcast’s infrastructure.

The Rural Broadband Study estimated that it will cost \$20.5 million to run a “backbone” network of fiber to connect three geographic areas of Frederick County that currently are not served by broadband. A fixed-wireless network could also help to bring broadband to unserved and underserved rural areas. County Executive’s proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2022 includes a \$1 million investment to advance solutions for rural broadband.

The Rural Broadband Study is available online at www.FrederickCountyMD.gov/8142/Rural-Broadband-Information. The [public information briefing](#) can be viewed at www.FrederickCountyMD.gov/FCGtv.

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