

Franklin County continues broadband expansion effort

LOUISBURG — Franklin County's focus on improving high-speed broadband and bringing fiber access across the county has received additional support.

Through new Completing Access to Broadband (CAB) grant funding, Brightspeed — formerly CenturyLink and Lumen — will begin deploying high speed fiber-to-the-home Internet in more than 2,300 locations.

In early July, the State Department of Information Technology's (NCDIT) Division of Broadband and Digital Equity announced the award of \$5,607,797 from the CAB program with a local match of \$1,962,728.95 from the county.

In April, county commissioners approved using \$2 million in of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds as a match. Brightspeed will bring fiber to 2,374 locations — 50 percent of Franklin County's 4,714 eligible locations — by October 2026.

"I fully support this over-

whelmingly," said Franklin County Commission Chair Harry Foy. "We have got to get this service out to the underserved parts of the county."

"Everybody needs Internet, like electricity, water and sewer," he said. "You have got to have it."

Franklin County has benefited from broadband grant funding in the past. Two previous awards under the Growing Rural Economies with Access to Technology (GREAT) allowed Brightspeed to deploy fiber to more than 3,400 locations in Franklin County.

A map identifying the areas awarded under the CAB program can be found on the county's website where information on the county's broadband efforts can also be found.

The CAB program provides an opportunity for counties to partner with NCDIT to deploy service projects in unserved areas of each county.