



Macon County Board of Commissioners

Broadband Update

Jeff Lee, May 13, 2025

Agenda



- Ongoing Grant/Subsidy/Expansion Projects
- CAB Grant Award
- Cowee School Public WiFi
- Future GRANT Programs

Frontier GREAT Grant Update



- Frontier GREAT Grant (\$3.8M grant, \$4.3M project)
 - Engineering and permitting complete
 - Wire center (headend) construction complete (2 facilities)
 - Fiber construction began last fall
 - Construction has been most active north of Franklin
 - Now seeing construction activity south around Otto
 - Anticipate connection of homes/businesses starting in June

BalsamWest Update



- BalsamWest GREAT Grant (\$1M grant, \$1.2M project)
 - Builds from south Macon broadband expansion - 2020
 - Engineering and permitting complete
 - Fiber construction began this spring around Otto
 - Additional construction is also beginning around Scaly Mountain
 - First batch of 35 addresses in Otto - activation in ~3 weeks
- Nantahala - serving 42 residences and 3 businesses
- Macon County businesses (other than Nantahala) - serving ~96
- Macon County residential fiber (other than Nantahala) - serving ~176

Charter RDOF Subsidy



- Charter Communications RDOF Subsidy through FCC (\$9M subsidy - 2022)
 - No evidence yet that Charter has begun construction in Macon County
 - No update from Charter since January
 - Future of RDOF program is uncertain given changes at the FCC
 - We are still hopeful Charter will begin deployment this year

CAB Grant Award



- CAB Round 1 agreement with BalsamWest (July 2025) fell through
- CAB Round 2 award made to Frontier in March 2025
 - \$2.3M grant, \$3.4M project, no County match required
 - Project to serve 411 homes and businesses in Sanderstown area
 - Official agreement completed in May 2025
 - Builds off Frontier GREAT project already underway
 - Projected completion by December 2026

Cowee School Public WiFi



- Cowee School is an award location under the Frontier GREAT grant
- Largest anchor institution in Cowee with county-wide impact
- Upgrade network at facility for public WiFi and education programs
- Utilizing a \$25K grant through Southwestern Commission (funding from Dogwood)
- Combining this grant with \$6K remaining from Nantahala project
- Expect fiber connection within the next couple of months

Future Broadband Grants



- North Carolina GREAT and CAB slated to continue in 2026
- Funding for these programs to be sourced by the federal IIJA legislation
- Broadband funding through \$42.5M BEAD program
- Program administered by the NTIA - grants awarded by states
- Current administration expected to make changes to BEAD program
- Outcome uncertain - impact could be minor or significant
- All state broadband offices nationwide on hold pending changes

MC Broadband Project Statistics



Project	Provider	Funding Source	Project Cost Estimate	Macon County Match or Contribution	Start	Completion	Project Type	Number of Locations Directly Served
South Macon	BalsamWest	Macon County BalsamWest	\$1,020,000	\$580,000	Q2 2021	Q3 2022	Middle Mile / Last Mile	3
GREAT Frontier	Frontier	NC Grant + match	\$4,440,000	\$50,000	Q2 2023	Q4 2025	Last Mile	2700
GREAT BalsamWest	BalsamWest	NC Grant + match	\$1,170,00	\$50,000	Q3 2023	Q4 2025	Last Mile	263
Nantahala Fiber	BalsamWest	Macon County BalsamWest	\$600,000	\$350,000	Q3 2023	Q2 2024	Middle Mile / Last Mile	5
Nantahala Public WiFi	SMS	SWC Grant	\$50,000	\$0	Q4 2023	Q2 2024	Public WiFi	5
RDOF	Charter	FCC USF	\$9,000,000	\$0	2025 ??	2028 ??	Middle Mile / Last Mile	8191
CAB	Frontier	NC Grant	\$3,400,00	\$0	Q2 2025	Q3 2026	Last Mile	1163
Cowee School Public WiFi	SA / Frontier	SWC Grant	\$31,000	\$0	Q1 2025	Q2 2025	Public WiFi	1
Totals			\$15,141,000	\$1,030,000				12,331

Thank You