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BALSAMWEST COMPLETES SOUTH MACON COUNTY FIBER BUILD, LAUNCHES SMALL BUSINESS CONNECT FUND

Over the past year BalsamWest has been working closely with Little T Broadband and Macon County on a project to extend fiber communications south of Franklin, NC along US Hwy 441. There were two phases to this project, getting fiber built to the Otto Community Center/Fire Department, and from there partnering with Haywood Electric Membership Cooperative to connect fiber to Scaly Mountain Fire Department and Community Center. We have diligently been working on this partnership and are happy to announce the route is now complete and ready for service.

Along this route BalsamWest has placed access points for future fiber expansion into residential communities and is now ready to serve those businesses along the fiber path. This allows us to reach the small businesses along 441, that previously were in an underserved area for broadband. Living in the south Macon County area, Jeff Lee can attribute to the benefit this project will have on the community. "Little T Broadband served as a technical resource for the project, helping to align the needs of the partnership. We were also successful in securing grant funds through the Southwestern Commission to create hotspots at the community centers, making the fiber internet available for students and residents as a stop gap measure until we are able to extend the fiber further into unserved areas," said Jeff Lee, President/CEO of Little T Broadband.

Macon County has been a financial partner to the project which was critical to its success. "Macon County is committed to facilitating and incentivizing broadband investments in the County. Our partnership with Little T Broadband and BalsamWest has been a local effort of which we are proud to be a part," says Commissioner Gary Shields. "We look forward to facilitating additional expansion as grants and other funds become available."

BalsamWest is planning to launch their small business connect fund within the coming weeks. So, what does this mean for businesses in Macon County and those along the 441 Corridor? BalsamWest will waive any upfront charges to build to businesses within a certain footage of their fiber route. Fiber costs can be prohibitive for small businesses, making it nearly impossible to afford upfront fiber installation and build costs. BalsamWest is committed to eliminating these costs for their customers so they can receive the same high quality fiber internet services that our region's major institutions and businesses enjoy. "Our owners are committed to the small businesses, residents, and governments of Macon County and WNC, says Ryan Sherby, CEO of BalsamWest and that "This multi-faceted partnership is a testament to the strong collaborative of local companies, non-profits and governments who have been investing in Macon County and WNC for decades. We look forward to serving small businesses by offering an extremely reliable network supported by local dedicated staff." Businesses outside of the US 441 south corridor may also be eligible for this offer.

As a locally owned company, BalsamWest's mission is to deliver robust communication services to our owners, commercial, and residential customers within our fiber footprint. Leverage opportunities to expand our infrastructure and operations to close the digital divide and provide career opportunities to our community. For information visit www.balsamwest.net.