

FPU wins \$1.75M broadband accessibility grant

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Fayetteville Public Utilities was recently awarded \$1.75 million as part of the third round of the State of Tennessee Broadband Accessibility Grant.

FPU realized the need for underserved customers to have reliable and affordable broadband service. These grant funds will provide this in the southwest portion of Lincoln County. The grant territory includes west of Highway 64, including the areas of McBurg and Dellrose, south to the Alabama border and back north to include sections of Camargo, Yukon, Molino, Blanche and Taft. This area has approximately five homes per mile and serves 1,009 customers.

FPU hopes to have the project complete in the fall or winter of 2021, but it could extend into the spring of 2022, said CEO/General Manager Britt Dye.

"I would like to thank all of the customers who provided such compelling feedback," he said. "The letters of support we received from customers showed the overwhelming importance of providing reliable broadband to the citizens of Fayetteville and Lincoln County.

"We would like to thank Gov. Bill Lee, Reps. Pat Marsh and Rick Tillis, and Sen. Shane Reeves, as well as Crystal Ivey with the state Department of Economic and Community Development. Their unwavering support and dedication were instrumental in FPU receiving these funds," Dye added.

Statewide, \$19.7 million in broadband accessibility grants has helped to play a fundamental role in the efforts to boost rural communities throughout Tennessee.

According to the FCC's 2019 Broadband Deployment Report, nearly one in four rural Tennesseans lack access to broadband. In response, Lee has included \$25 million in his fiscal year 2021 recommended budget to continue the grant program.

Tennessee's broadband program has been recognized nationally for its efforts to expand broadband connectivity, most recently in a report by The Pew Charitable Trusts on "How States are Expanding Broadband Access." The report highlights Tennessee's investment in broadband infrastructure with a dedicated grant program and efforts to address adoption and digital literacy.

