



*State of North Carolina
Office of the Governor*

*Roy Cooper
Governor*

May 17, 2019

*20301 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, N. C. 27699-0301*

Mr. Sonny Perdue, Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

RE: USDA Reconnect Grant-Rural Broadband
Saluda Mountain Telephone Company

Dear Secretary Perdue:

This letter is to offer my unconditional support to the ReConnect Grant Application filed by Saluda Mountain Telephone Company dba RiverStreet Networks (a subsidiary of Wilkes Telephone Membership Corporation, which provides service in rural areas of Henderson and Polk Counties, North Carolina). This specific grant would enable RiverStreet to provide fiber based broadband service to approximately 671 currently underserved customers in rural Henderson County, NC. The general service areas of this grant are in the area of Macedonia Road, and in and around the Whites Lake Subdivision. The Fiber-To-The-Premise (FTTP) network will be capable of symmetrical broadband services of up to 1Gbps.

North Carolina has a dedicated Broadband Infrastructure Office within N.C. Department of Information Technology, which administers the State Broadband Plan that can be accessed at www.ncbroadband.gov. In 2018, the North Carolina General Assembly enacted the Growing Rural Economies with Access to Technology Act (GREAT Act), which provides matching state grants to encourage rural broadband deployment. North Carolina law also permits public utilities in North Carolina to provide broadband services, and a bill is currently before the General Assembly that would also authorize Electric Membership Corporations to seek federal grants to deploy broadband infrastructure. In 2018, the General Assembly established an expedited process for small cell site permitting, the Department of Transportation, which manages 80 percent of the

Secretary Sonny Perdue
May 17, 2019
Page 2

established an online permitting approval process to expedite utility construction, and further streamlining of the permitting processes will be considered during the current session.

Broadband is essential to a high quality of life and economic opportunity for rural communities. We appreciate the commitment of the USDA to this effort and I pledge the continuing support of my administration to a similar effort at the State level.

With kind regards, I am

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roy Cooper". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "R" and "C".

Roy Cooper

RAC/sm