



APPLICATION FORM

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2020.** Please include this application form with electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Franklin County

Program Title: Broadband Countywide

Program Category: Community and Economic Development

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Steven Sandy

Title: Director of Planning and Community Development

Department: Planning and Community Development

Telephone: 540-483-3027 Website: franklincountyva.gov

Email: steve.sandy@franklincountyva.gov

SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Christopher Whitlow

Title: County Administrator

Signature: 

Broadband Countywide

Executive Summary

Franklin County is located in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains at the southern end of the Roanoke Valley. The County is 683 square miles with numerous rivers, Smith Mountain Lake and Philpott Reservoir.

Franklin County Board of Supervisors has known the need for the increased access to affordable high-speed data, internet, and telecommunications services for all residences of the County. Affordable high-speed data, internet, and telecommunication services are important for fostering economic development, improving educational opportunities, ensuring public safety, and enhancing the overall quality of life of the citizens of Franklin County.

In November of 2017 Franklin County Board of Supervisors created the Franklin County Broadband Authority to address the issue the lack of affordable high-speed internet and telecommunications services. The Board of Supervisors serve as the members of the Franklin County Broadband Authority. The Broadband Authority adopted Public-Private Education Facilities and Infrastructure Act Guidelines in January of 2018. Followed by the adoption of the Broadband Assessment and Plan in August of 2019. The Plan was subsequently adopted by the Board of Supervisors as an amendment to the County's Comprehensive Plan.

The County received \$650,000 in 2019 from the Virginia Tobacco Commission to complete several fiber projects with Shentel. In January of 2020, the County received approval of a grant through the Virginia Telecommunications Initiative (VATI) in the amount of \$2.3 million to assist in building Phase 1 of the Broadband Plan.

Franklin County has utilized the framework and resources available in Virginia to create an Authority, survey its citizens, assess broadband needs, and develop a plan. The County's phased hybrid plan relies on partnerships with private providers to leverage private, Federal, State, and local funding to provide the most efficient and financially feasible broadband services to its citizens.

Franklin County "Broadband Countywide"
Franklin County Broadband Authority
Submission for Virginia Association of Counties
Achievement Awards

Problem and Challenge for the County

The Board of Supervisors had been hearing for years from citizens and businesses concerning the need to access affordable high-speed data, internet, and telecommunication services in the County. Areas in the county where citizens, businesses, and employees were unable to access reliable cellular service or internet to do basic task for their jobs or leisure because of such poor service or lack of service. Citizens and businesses relaying on dial up or other types of internet services like satellite that can be very expensive and not reliable.

In 2007, the Board of Supervisors stated the following in the County's 2025 Comprehensive Plan in Chapter 11, Goals, Objectives, and Strategies for Public Utilities:

Objective: Provide countywide cellular service.

Strategies:

- (1) Conduct service area, customer base studies in conjunction with service providers to determine those area that have inadequate service.
- (2) Conduct meetings with staff, citizens, and cellular providers to develop a strategy promoting countywide service.

Objective: To develop broadband internet opportunities for the citizens of the entire County.

Objectives:

- (1) Identify new technology opportunities and encourage their implementation to provide the maximum coverage throughout the County.
- (2) Encourage the adoption and use of new technologies as they become available.

The Board of Supervisors and staff asking what can be done to deliver better service to our citizens and business communities.

Solution-Partnering/Collaboration

In November of 2017 the Board of Supervisors determined that in order to facilitate affordable high speed data, internet, and telecommunications service it was in their best interest for Franklin County to form a Wireless Service Authority pursuant to the Virginia Wireless Service Authorities Act, Chapter 54.1 of Title 15.2 of the Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, and form the Franklin County Broadband Authority. Over the next two (2) years, the County and Authority worked with the Center for Innovative Technology (CIT) to identify potential broadband adoptions barriers, current broadband demand, future capacity needs, local assets, and to review County ordinances and policies related to broadband deployment. In addition, CIT completed a needs assessment and a citizens' survey. The needs assessment showed there was a lack of adequate broadband in the County. Over 6200 responses to the survey were received showing many citizens had no or very little internet service at their home.

The Authority adopted rules and procedures for their monthly meetings. The Authority has the standard procedures for their organizational meeting to regular and special meetings but added a citizen's comment period to their meetings to hear from citizens directly concerning broadband or any topic.

In January 2018 the Franklin County Broadband Authority adopted Public-Private Education Facilities and Infrastructure Act Guidelines. These guidelines were adopted to provide guidance for private entities seeking the Authority's approval of a qualifying project under the Virginia Public-Private Education Facilities and Infrastructure Act of 2002. The guidelines cover general provisions, solicited and unsolicited proposals, proposal preparation and submission at conceptual stage, proposal evaluation and selection criteria, and interim agreement terms.

(<https://www.franklincountyva.gov/DocumentCenter/View/1099/Public-Private-Education-Facilities-and-Infrastructure-Act-Guidelines-for-Broadband-Authority-PDF>)

In 2019, the County hired a consultant (Design Nine, Inc.) with a grant funded from the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to develop a broadband assessment and plan. This plan builds on the work performed by CIT as a basis/foundation for the study. The plan consists of options of ownership and governance, to existing assets in the County, to different existing service areas and options, needs assessment, level of service, last mile connectivity solutions (overview of networks technologies), recommendations for implementation, broadband, economic development, partnerships and funding strategies, and organization and network operations. The plan was adopted by the Authority in August of 2019. The Planning Commission made a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors to adopt the Broadband Assessment and plan and incorporate the plan as part of the County's Comprehensive Plan as an amendment. In February 2020 the Board of Supervisors held a public hearing and adopted and incorporated the Broadband Assessment and Plan into the Comprehensive Plan as an amendment

<https://www.franklincountyva.gov/DocumentCenter/View/1102/Broadband-Assessment-and-Plan---August-2019-PDF>

In 2019 the Franklin County Broadband Authority issued a Request for Proposals (RFP), under the requirements of the VA Public-Private Education Act (PPEA), for conceptual phase proposals from private firms or joint ventures to provide for expansion of broadband access and capacity into un-/under-served areas of the County. The RFP set forth the terms and conditions whereby the Authority may enter into a comprehensive agreement with one (or more) successful Offeror(s) to provide the partnership services described in the proposal.

The PPEA is the legislative framework enabling the Commonwealth of Virginia and local governments and other political subdivisions to enter into agreements authorizing private entities to design, construct, improve, maintain, and/or operate qualifying public construction or infrastructure projects.

The RFP described the Authority's desire to expand broadband access in unserved areas and improved capacity in underserved areas using a Public/Private Partnership providing quality broadband to its citizens. The RFP recognized the economics of expanding broadband in rural areas and that the Authority is prepared to take action to improve those economics as much as possible to entice private sector investment. It also points out that the Authority is technology agnostic and understands the need to leverage all technologies to deliver broadband to every area and as such is open to forming partnerships with more than one provider, as well as incumbents.

The PPEA RFP and it was posted to the County website and advertised for 60 days in accordance with law and the Authority authorized the County Administrator, or

designee, to provide public information to, and meet with, other potential proposers during the advertising period upon request.

In addition, an advisory committee was formed to evaluate proposals. The advisory committee was made up of the following members:

- a. Broadband Authority Chairman and Vice-Chairman
- b. County Administrator
- c. Deputy County Administrator
- d. Director of Planning & Community Development
- e. Director of Economic Development
- f. Director of IT
- g. Emergency Communications Coordinator
- h. GIS Coordinator
- i. Andrew Michael Cohill, Ph.D., President of Design Nine, Inc. (Consultant)

In evaluating the proposals, the advisory committee considered (i) the proposed cost of the qualifying facility; (ii) the general reputation, industry experience, and financial capacity of the private entity; (iii) the proposed design of the qualifying project; (iv) the eligibility of the facility for accelerated selection, review, and documentation timelines under the responsible public entity's guidelines; (v) local citizen and government comments; (vi) benefits to the public; (vii) the private entity's compliance with a minority business enterprise participation plan or good faith effort to comply with the goals of such plan; (viii) the private entity's plans to employ local contractors and residents; (ix) public input at a public hearing on the matter; and (x) other criteria that the advisory committee deems appropriate, and make a written recommendation to the Board of its

recommendation. The advisory committee recommended the proposal(s) that constituted the best value, meaning the overall combination of quality, price, and the various elements of required services that in total are optimal relative to the Authority's needs.

The advisory committee met with the consultant and reviewed proposals and made a recommendation to the Authority at the July 2019 Broadband Authority meeting. The Authority accepted the recommendation and directed staff to move to detailed phase of PPEA process with Blue Ridge Towers/Brisnet and Point Broadband and begin conceptual design for phased approach of fixed wireless and fiber deployment in the County.

The County also received unsolicited proposals from Shenandoah Telecommunications Company, Inc. (Shentel) to expand coaxial fiber to the home in several residential areas to help meet the broadband objectives. These proposals were recommended by the advisory committee and the Authority. The County received \$650,000 in funding in 2019 from the Virginia Tobacco Commission to complete several fiber projects with Shentel.

In January 2020, Franklin County was awarded \$2,383,039 to continue development of a hybrid solution that the County believes will solve the broadband issue in Franklin County as identified in the County's Broadband Plan adopted by the Franklin County Broadband Authority in August 2019. This hybrid solution calls for deploying fixed wireless in phases on existing structures where possible and building new structures where needed to reach the more rural and remote communities of Franklin County. The Broadband Plan also outlines a phased approach to installing fiber to the homes in the County's designated growth areas and villages. These areas are expected to have higher

residential density and more commercial activity making these areas more practical and cost effective to serve with fiber.

The awarded 2020 VATI Program funding from the state will be used by the County to begin a collaborative effort to satisfy Phase 1 of the County's Broadband Plan. This collaborative effort will involve Blue Ridge Towers/Brisnet and Shentel as private partners in providing fixed wireless internet as well as fiber to the home service in some areas.

Blue Ridge Towers/Brisnet is proposing to provide fixed wireless broadband service to some of the communities most in need. These areas include Burnt Chimney, Scruggs, and Westlake in the northeast; Glade Hill, Snow Creek, Sontag, and Tom's Knob in the southeast; Callaway and Boones Mill in the northwest; and Fork Mountain and Henry in the southwestern portion of the County. (See attached maps) This initial funding for the fixed wireless system in Phase 1 is expected to will allow for service to more than 21,500 homes, businesses, and other critical sites in Franklin County. This service is expected to provide 50 to 100 mbs internet speeds to residential customers in these communities.

Shentel has also prepared a solution to provide new fiber connections to the homes in areas designated in the County's Broadband Plan. Shentel proposes to add 6.5 miles of new fiber in the Union Hall Village area to serve an estimated 190 properties, homes and businesses along Old Salem School Road in the Penhook community, which is part of the County's Village Plan for this area. This fiber provides up to 1 Gbps service to residences and businesses in this growth area.

The work of the Franklin County Broadband Authority under the requirements of the Virginia Public-Private Education Act (PPEA) to allow conceptual phase proposals from private firms (such as Blue Ridge Towers/Brisnet and Shentel) to provide for the expansion of Broadband access into un-/under-served areas of Franklin County is a win for both the County and its citizens moving forward.

Brief Overview of Broadband Countywide:

The Franklin County Board of Supervisors recognizing the need for affordable high-speed internet Countywide and with having the vision to create the Franklin County Broadband Authority. The adoption of the Broadband for Franklin County/Broadband Assessment and Plan to guide the Authority on existing services, to areas of need in the County, how to fix the need, and partner with private firms to serve the citizens and businesses, and communities of the county.

The Authority using the legislative framework under the requirements of the Virginia Public-Private Education Act (PPEA) to seek phase proposals from private firms to provide for the expansion of broadband access into un-/under-served areas of the County.

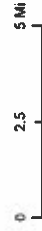
The County in 2019 secured \$650,000 from the Virginia Tobacco Commission to complete several fiber projects with Shentel. In January of 2020, the County received \$2.3 million to assist in building Phase I of the Plan. The construction of eight (8) new towers throughout the County to serve some of the communities with the most need, which are Callaway, Snow Creek, Sontag, Glade Hill, Westlake, Summit View, Fork Mountain, and Henry.

Franklin County 2020 VATI Grant Attachment 1 - Project Area Map

Sheet 1 of 5

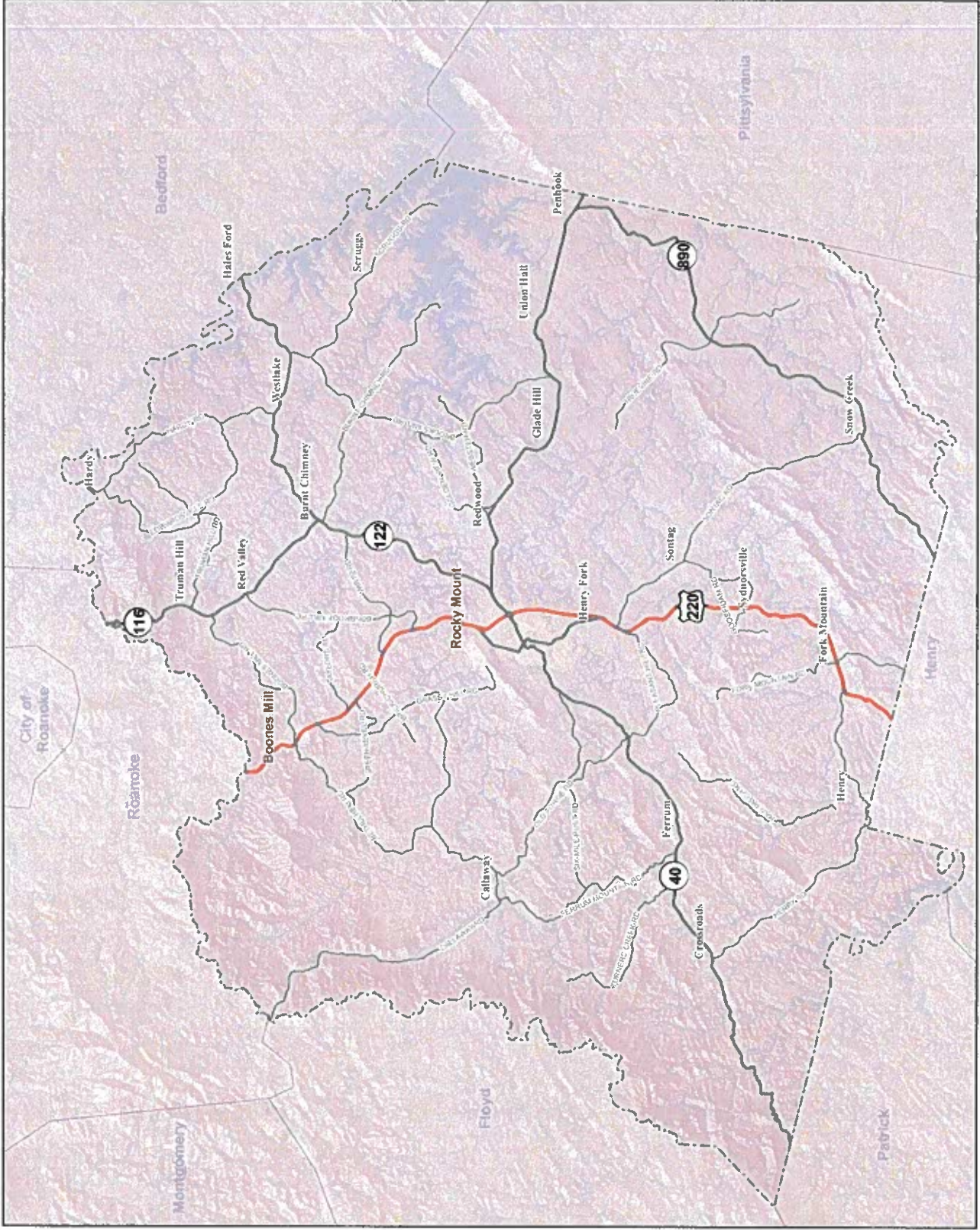


- Franklin County
- Surrounding Counties
- Water Features
- US Hwy
- State Hwy
- Collector



The data layers provided herein were compiled from various sources and are not guaranteed to be accurate. The data provided herein are for the primary use of Franklin County. The data are provided for reference purposes only. The data are not to be used for any other purpose, including legal survey, legal description, or standard due diligence. No guarantee, expressed or implied, is made by Franklin County for the accuracy, completeness, timeliness, or reliability of the data. These data are provided "as is" and neither Franklin County nor its employees shall be held responsible for their inappropriate use.

Date: 9/3/2019



Franklin County 2020 VATI Grant

Attachment 1 - Project Area Map
Showing

Proposed Fixed Wireless
Structures & Fiber Area

Sheet 2 of 5



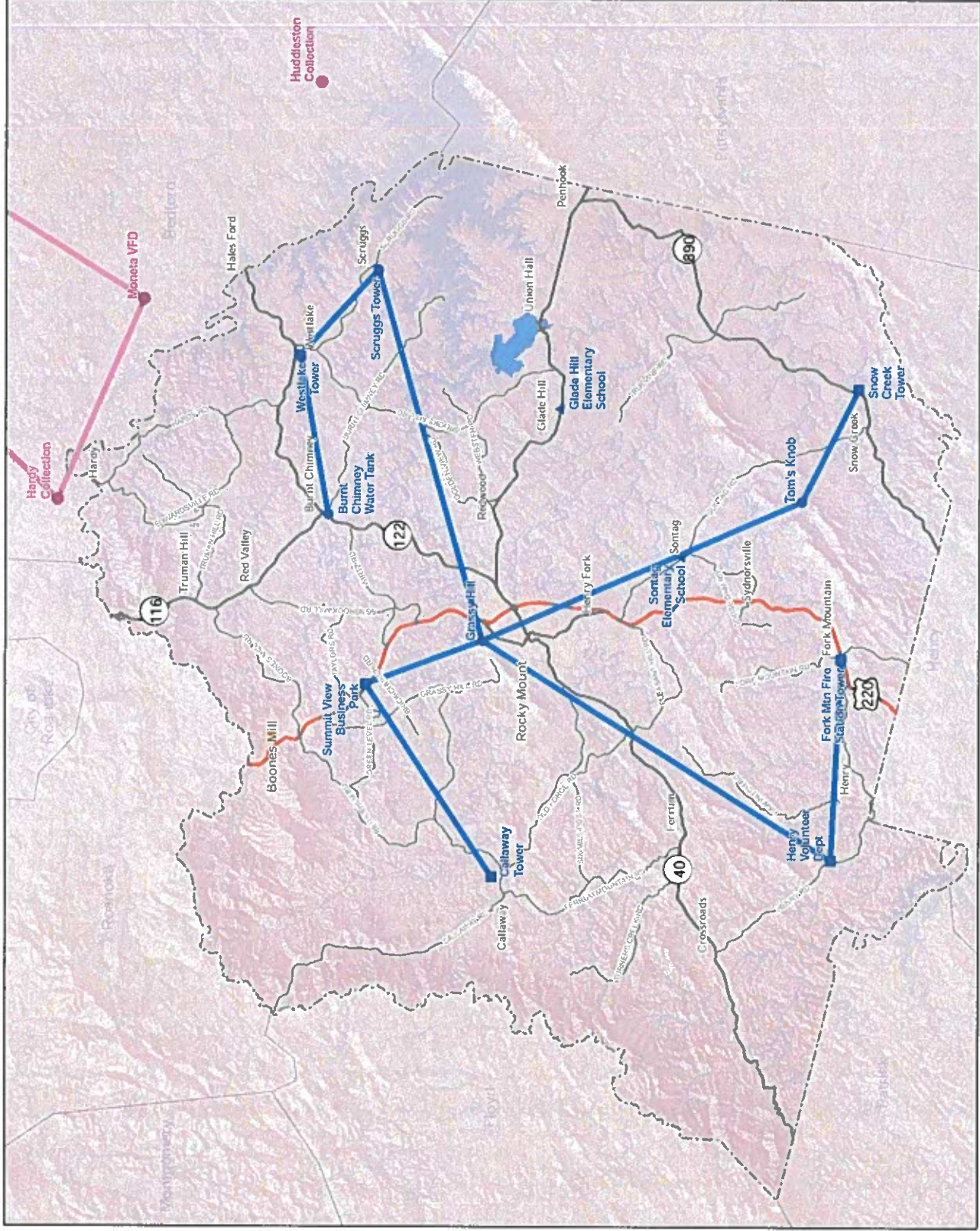
- Franklin - Existing Pole
- Franklin - New Monopole
- Franklin - Community Pole
- Bedford - Tower Sites
- Franklin Co Backhaul
- Bedford Co Backhaul
- Shentel Fiber Proposal
(See Sheet 5 of 5)
- Franklin County
- Surrounding Counties
- Towns
- Water Features
- US Hwy
- State Hwy
- Collector

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Date: 9/3/2019

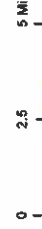


Franklin County 2020 VATI Grant Attachment 1 - Project Area Map Showing: Proposed Fixed Wireless & Fiber Coverage

Sheet 3 of 5

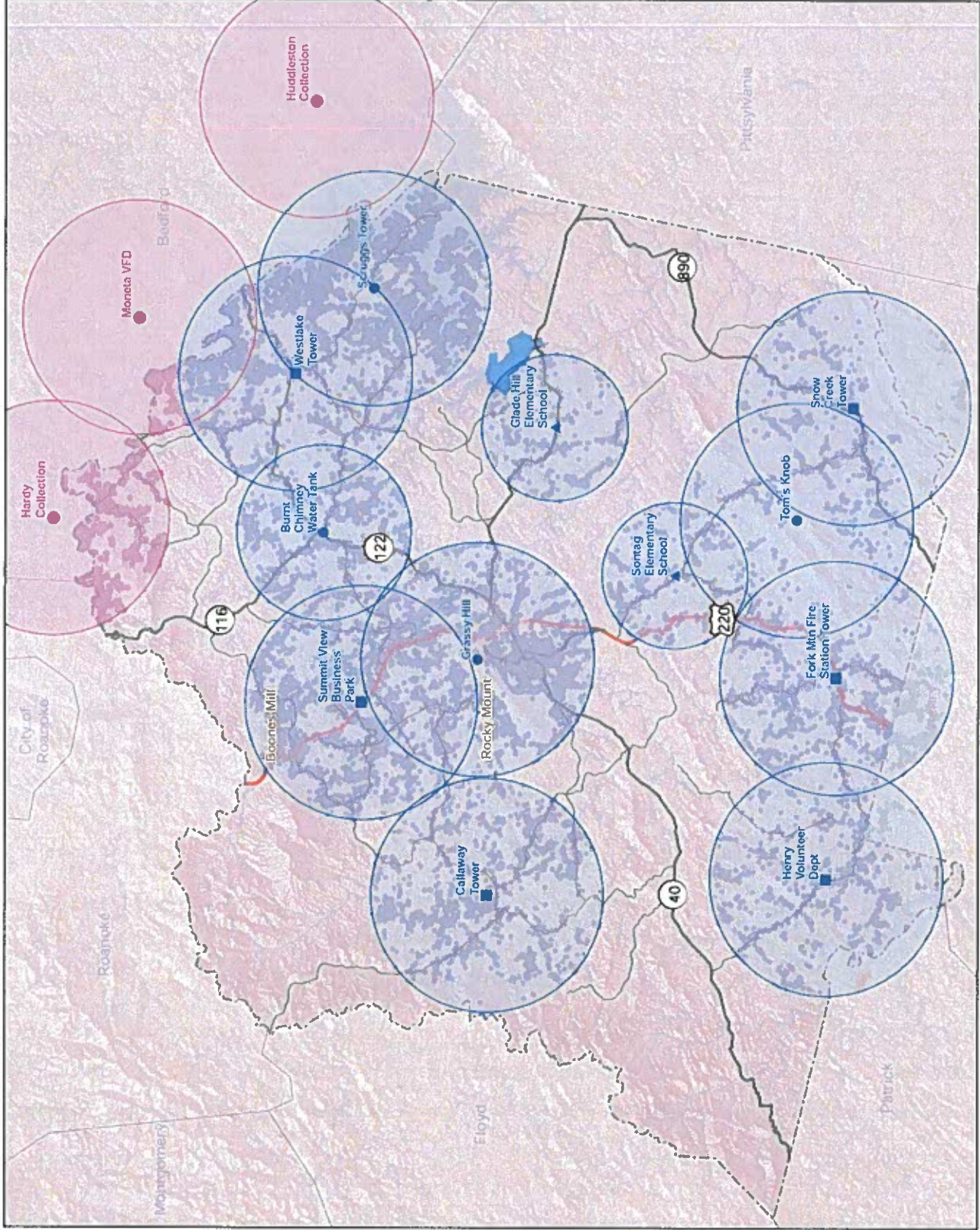


- Reached by Franklin Sites
(21,495 Addresses)
- Reached by Bedford Sites
(725 Addresses)
- Henry Co Coverage
(341 Addresses)
- Patrick Co Coverage
(39 Addresses)
- Franklin - Existing Pole
- Franklin - New Monopole
- Franklin - Community Pole
- Bedford - Tower Sites
- Franklin Co Tower Coverage
- Bedford Co Tower Coverage
- Shenitel Fiber Proposal
(See Sheet 5 of 5)
- Franklin County
- Surrounding Counties
- Water Features
- US Hwy
- State Hwy
- Primary Collector



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Date: 9/3/2019



Franklin County 2020 VATI Grant Attachment 1 - Project Area Map

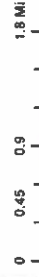
Showing:

Proposed Fixed Wireless
& Fiber Coverage

Inset 3A

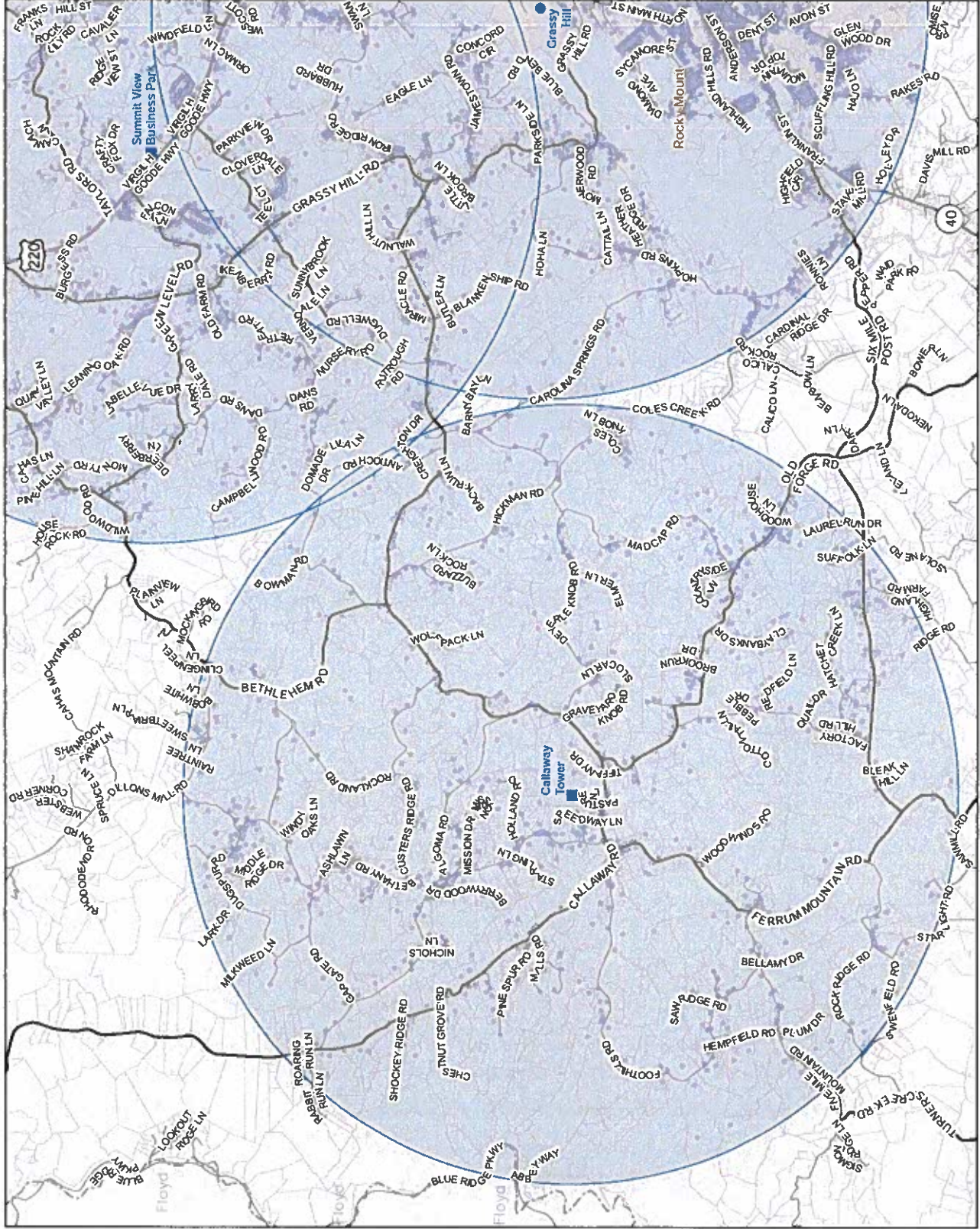


- Franklin - Existing Pole
- Franklin - New Monopole
- Franklin - Community Pole
- Bedford - Tower Sites
- Franklin Co Tower Coverage
- Bedford Co Tower Coverage
- Shenandoah Fiber Proposal
- Tax Parcels
- Franklin County
- Water Features
- US Hwy
- State Hwy
- Primary Collector



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Date: 9/3/2019

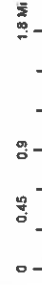


Franklin County 2020 VATI Grant Attachment 1 - Project Area Map

Showing:
Proposed Fixed Wireless
& Fiber Coverage
Inset 3B

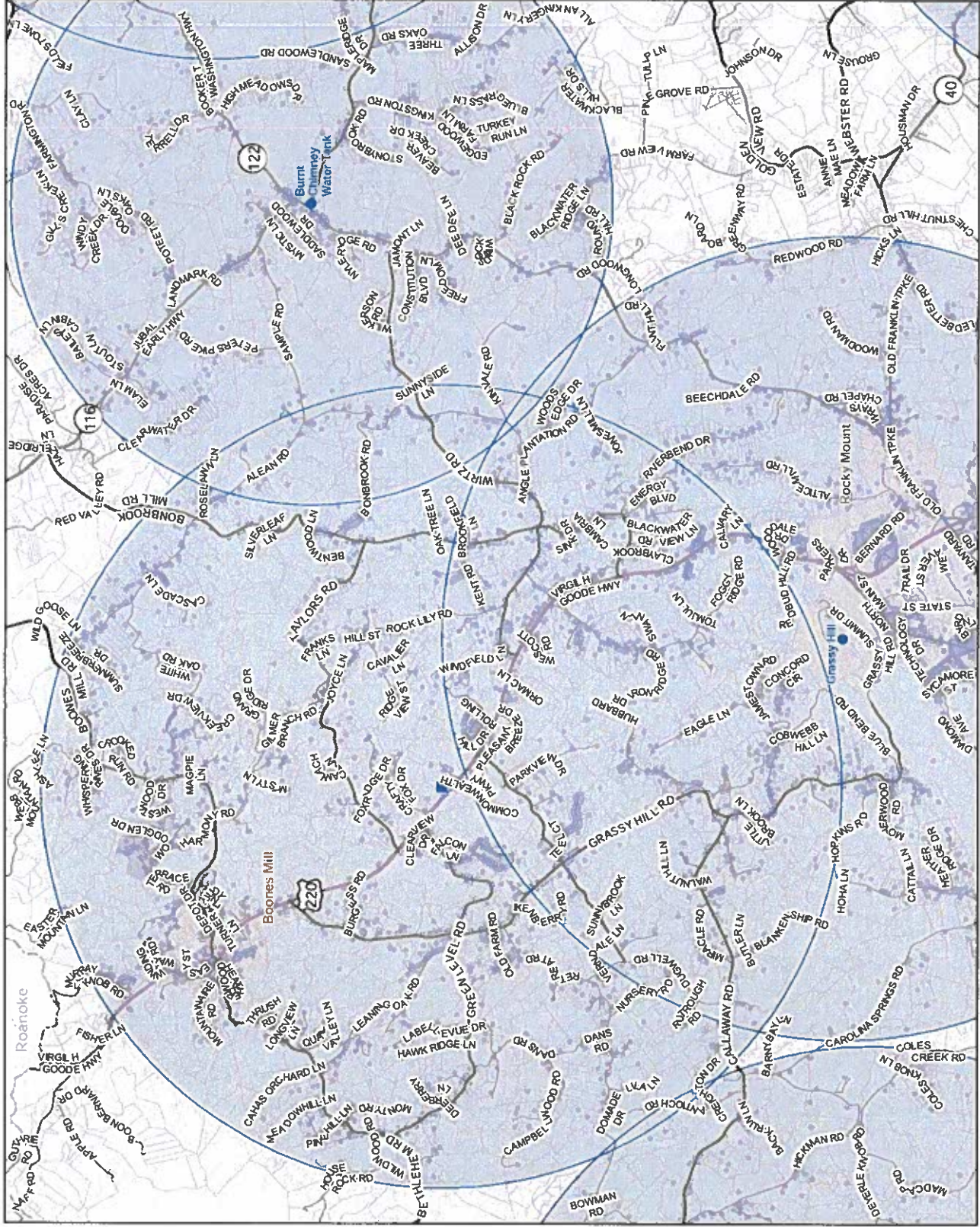


- Franklin - Existing Pole
- Franklin - New Monopole
- Franklin - Community Pole
- Bedford - Tower Sites
- Franklin Co Tower Coverage
- Bedford Co Tower Coverage
- Shentel Fiber Proposal
- Tax Parcels
- Franklin County
- Water Features
- US Hwy
- State Hwy
- Primary Collector

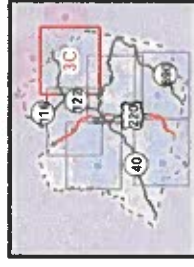


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Date: 9/3/2019



Franklin County 2020 VATI Grant Attachment 1 - Project Area Map Showing: Proposed Fixed Wireless & Fiber Coverage Inset 3C

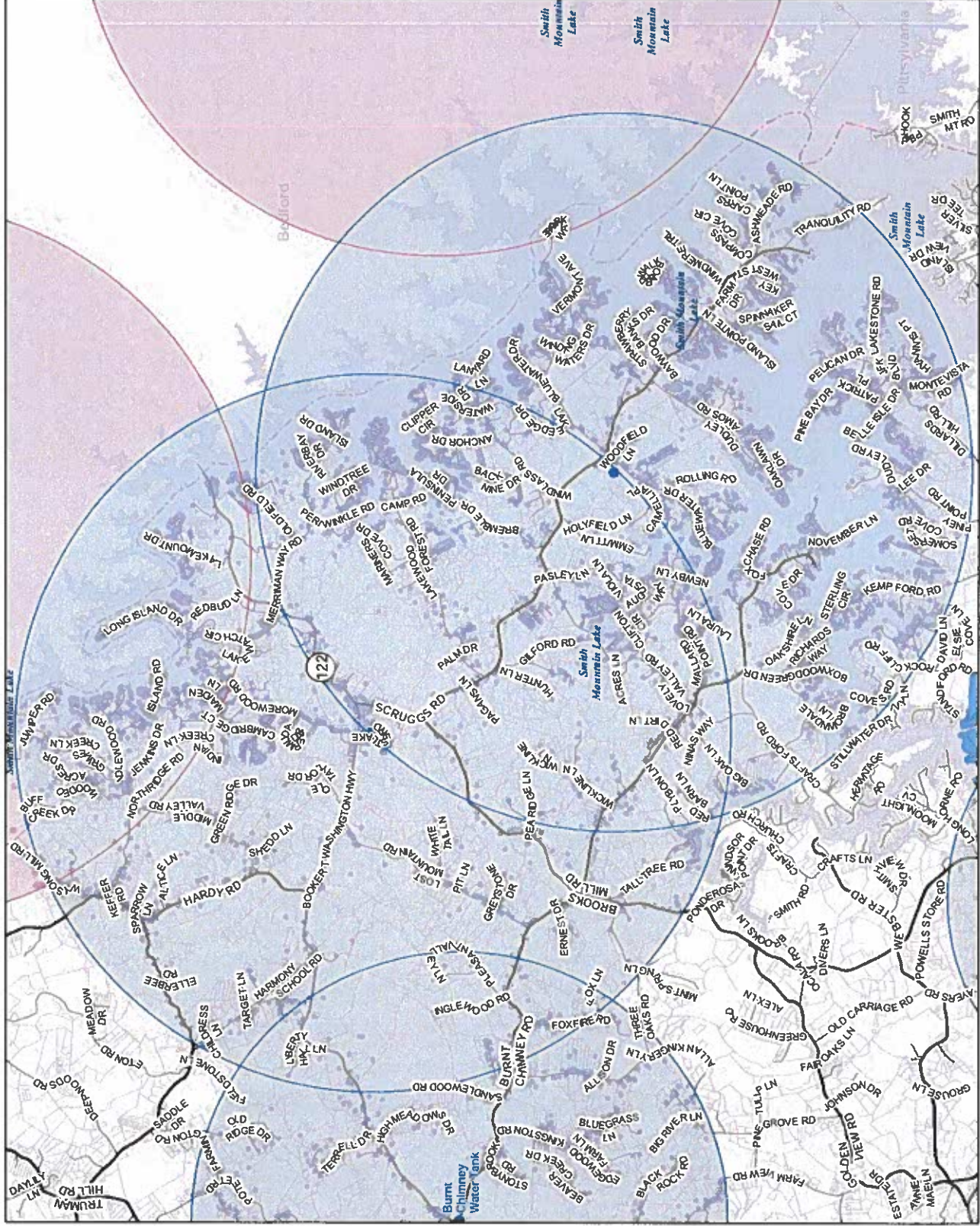


- Franklin - Existing Pole
- Franklin - New Monopole
- Franklin - Community Pole
- Bedford - Tower Sites
- Franklin Co Tower Coverage
- Bedford Co Tower Coverage
- Shentel Fiber Proposal
- Tax Parcels
- Franklin County
- Water Features
- US Hwy
- State Hwy
- Primary Collector

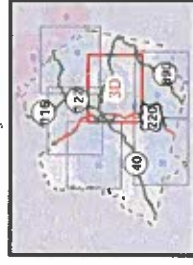


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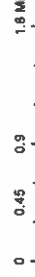
Date: 8/3/2019



Franklin County 2020 VATI Grant Attachment 1 - Project Area Map Showing: Proposed Fixed Wireless & Fiber Coverage Inset 3D

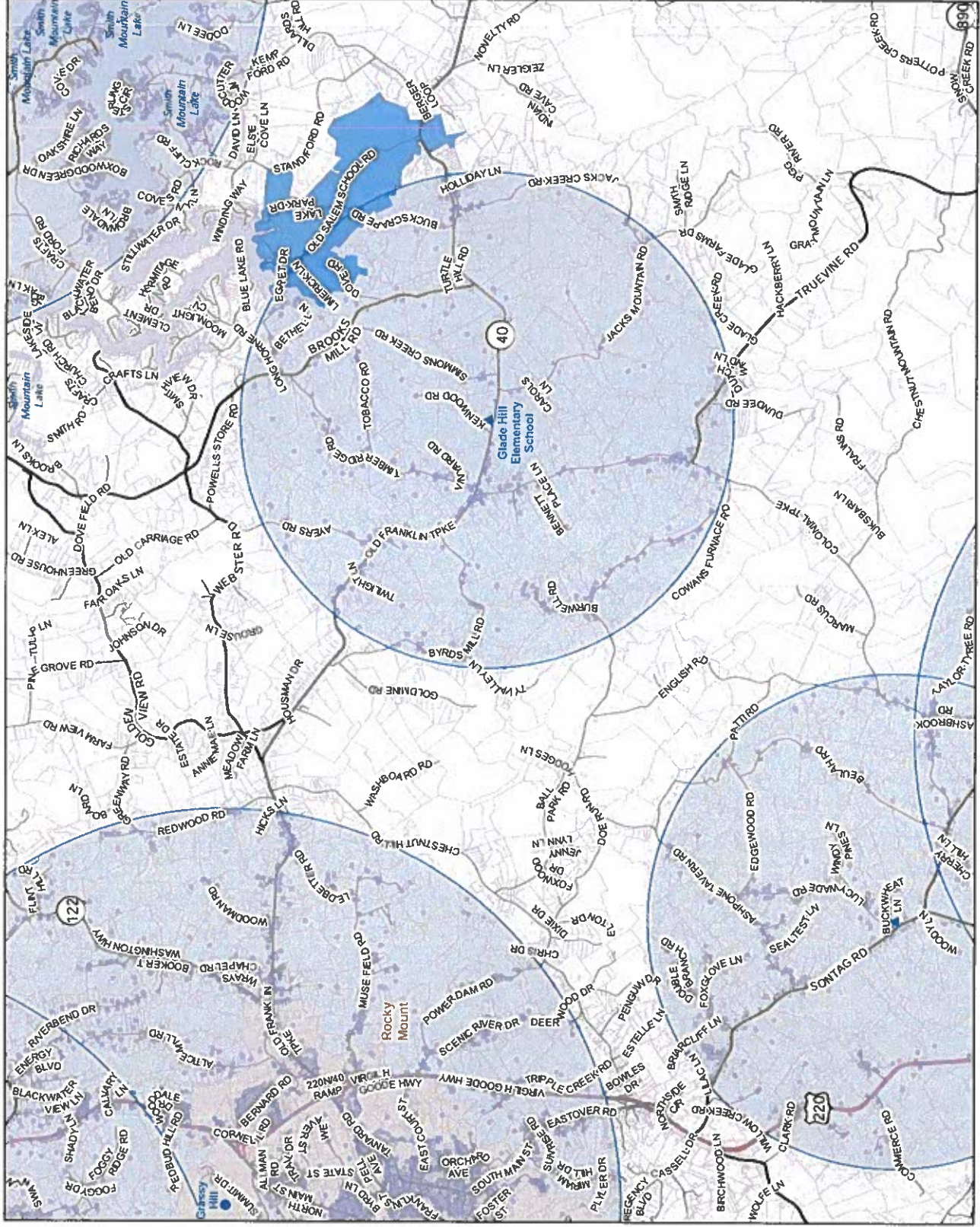


- Franklin - Existing Pole
- Franklin - New Monopole
- Franklin - Community Pole
- Bedford - Tower Sites
- Franklin Co Tower Coverage
- Bedford Co Tower Coverage
- Shentel Fiber Proposal
- Tax Parcels
- Franklin County
- Water Features
- US Hwy
- State Hwy
- Primary Collector



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Date: 9/3/2019

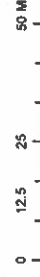


Franklin County 2020 VATI Grant Attachment 1 - Project Area Map Showing: Proposed Fixed Wireless & Fiber Coverage

Inset 3E

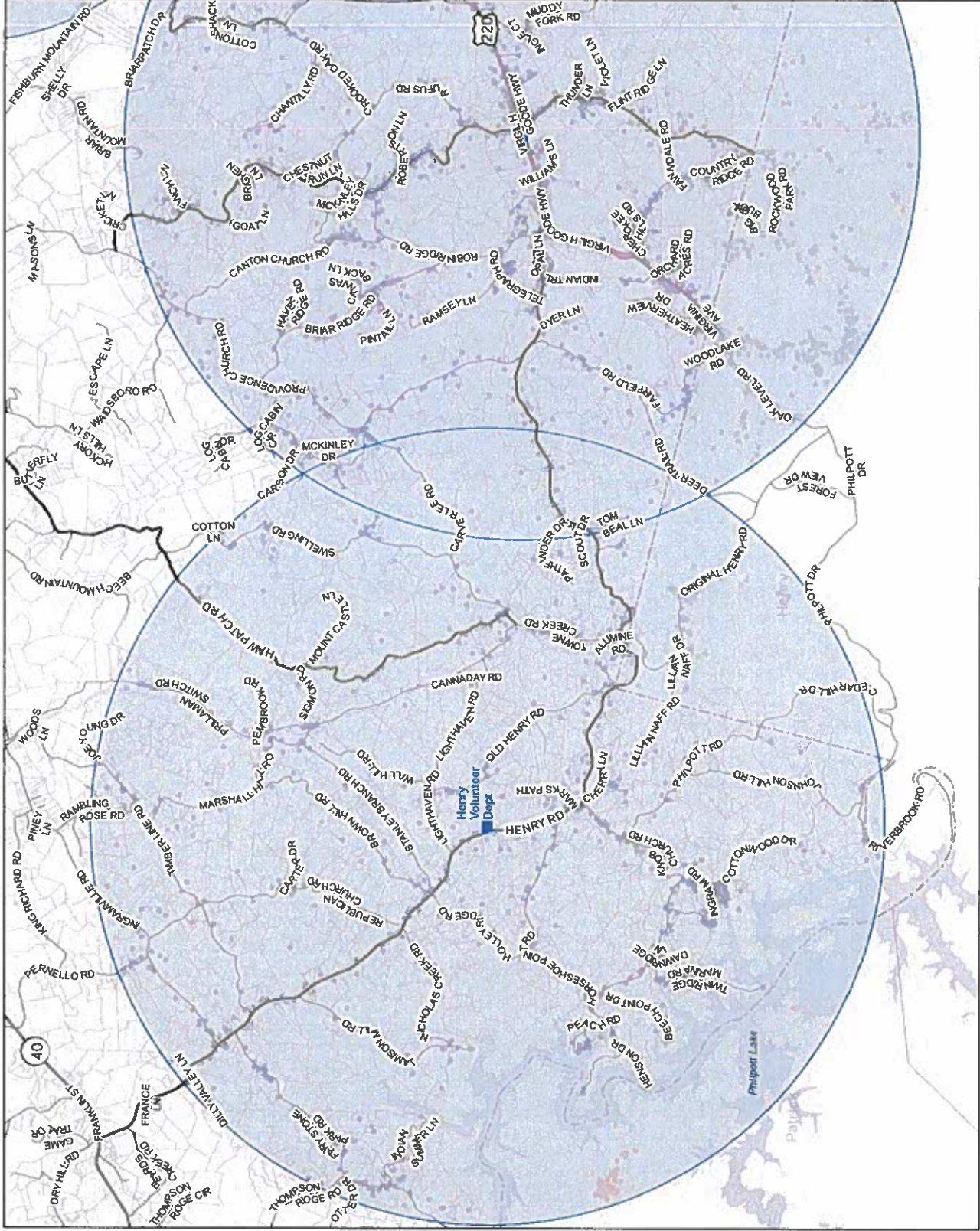


- Franklin - Existing Pole
- Franklin - New Monopole
- Franklin - Community Pole
- Bedford - Tower Sites
- Franklin Co Tower Coverage
- Bedford Co Tower Coverage
- Shentel Fiber Proposal
- Tax Parcels
- Franklin County
- Water Features
- US Hwy
- State Hwy
- Primary Collector



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Date: 9/3/2019



Franklin County 2020 VATI Grant Attachment 1 - Project Area Map Showing: Proposed Fixed Wireless & Fiber Coverage Inset 3F

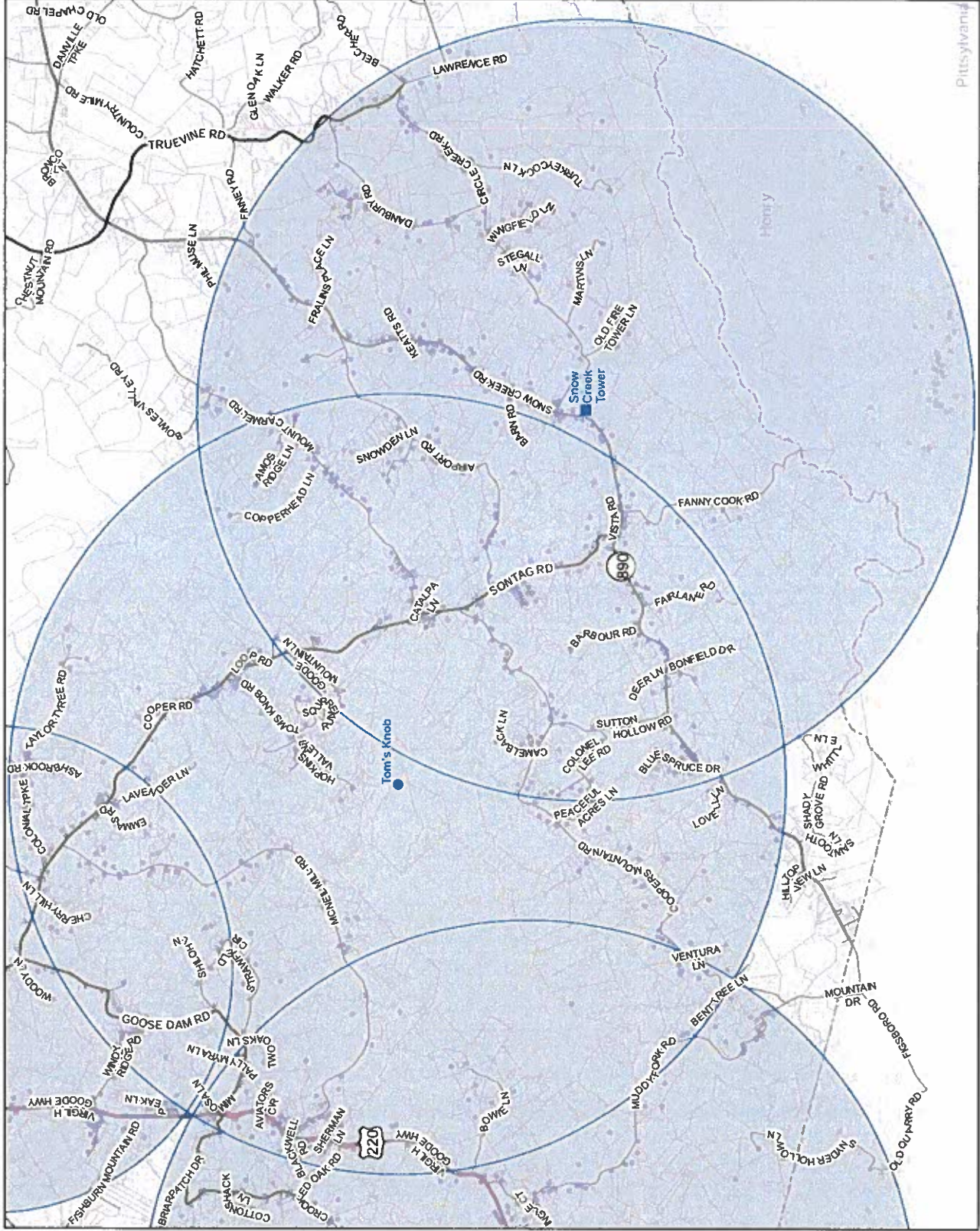


- Franklin - Existing Pole
- Franklin - New Monopole
- Franklin - Community Pole
- Bedford - Tower Sites
- Franklin Co Tower Coverage
- Bedford Co Tower Coverage
- Shenell Fiber Proposal
- Tax Parcels
- Franklin County
- Water Features
- US Hwy
- State Hwy
- Primary Collector



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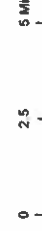
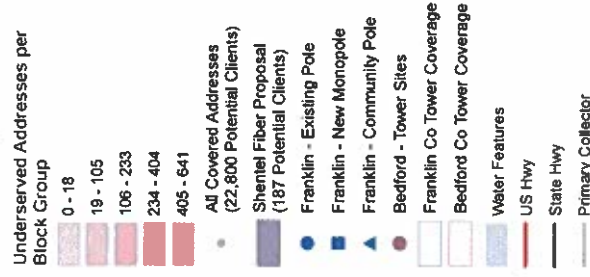
Date: 9/3/2019



Franklin County 2020 VATI Grant

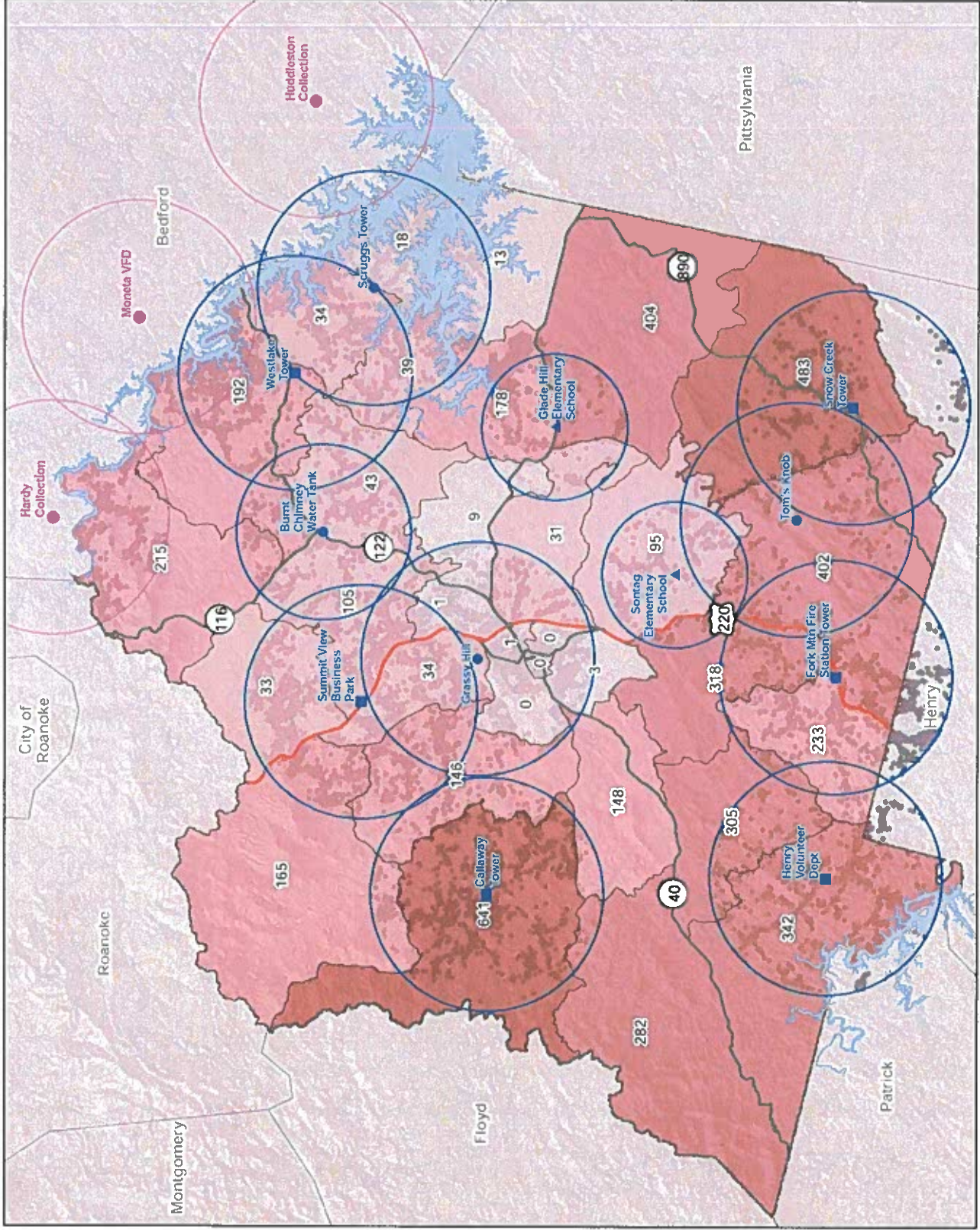
Attachment 1 - Project Area Map
Showing:
US Census Bureau
Block Group Coverage

Sheet 4 of 5



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Date: 9/3/2019



Franklin County 2020 VATI Grant Attachment 1 - Project Area Map Showing: Potential Fiber Broadband Service Expansion

Sheet 5 of 5



- Potential Clients**
- Residential (112)
 - Non-Residential (4)
 - Vacant Lot (76)
- Potential Service Area**
- Tax Parcels
 - Water Features

0 550 1,100 2,200 Ft



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Date: 8/2/2019

