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PRESS RELEASE

Franklin, Granville and Vance Counties release broadband enhancement Request for Proposal (RFP)

Kerr-Tar Regional Council of Governments (Kerr-Tar COG) led effort moves into RFP phase

Henderson, NC, August 7, 2018: High-speed broadband access is becoming increasingly essential for access to education, access to healthcare, civic engagement, economic participation and entertainment. Many rural counties in North Carolina have many citizens stuck in the broadband slow lane. Citizens and businesses are either limited to accessing service at the Federal Communications Commission's 10 Mbps download/1 Mbps upload minimum definition of broadband or somewhere below this level.

Commissioners and other leaders in Franklin, Granville and Vance Counties, led by the Kerr-Tar COG began in January 2018 to engage in a process to work toward a better broadband future for their counties.

For the past 7 months, the counties formed broadband action committees, gathered data, surveyed citizens. The findings were both informative and gave a stark call to action.

- All counties have identified businesses that are unable to procure needed levels of broadband service, even in high density areas
- There are significant, low population density areas of all three counties where residents report one or less options for terrestrial or fixed wireless broadband service

- Almost 50% of businesses in Franklin and Granville County expressed dissatisfaction with their current broadband service
- Over 40% of residents in Franklin and 50% of residents in Granville are dissatisfied with their current broadband service
- Over 85% of citizens and businesses in all counties want County and Municipal government to become involved in assisting private sector service providers offer better service
- County Commissioners feel improved broadband access is a key to access to education; access to healthcare and future economic vitality

As a result, Franklin, Granville and Vance Counties today issued "Requests for Proposal" to private sector broadband service providers outlining the desire to improve broadband service in their counties. Kerr-Tar COG is helping to coordinate this effort across the counties.

Each county is issuing its own RFP, describing its own situation. There are, however.

- Common timelines for responding to the RFPs
- A common website where information regarding all three RFPs can be obtained:
<http://www.kerrtarco.org/>
- Common thoughts on potential incentives and access to facilities the Counties are willing to offer to attract better service. Incentives and access to county and municipal facilities are subject to limitations in State statutes.
- Encouragement of RFP respondents to coordinate internal efforts and produce proposals to improve service in the three contiguous counties

"The overwhelming opinion of residents and businesses in Franklin, Granville and Vance Counties is that access to improved broadband service in all areas of their counties is a top issue," said Diane Cox, Executive Director of the Kerr-Tar COG. "Kerr-Tar COG is proud to work with the County Commissioners in Franklin, Granville and Vance County in their effort to attract better broadband service."

Proposals from service providers responding to the RFP are due in October, 2018. The Counties will then review the proposals and decide on next steps.