

Governor Beshear Announces Grant to Provide Broadband Access to Eastern Kentucky Region



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Grant to Bring Broadband Service to Breathitt, Estill, Lee and Powell Counties

BEATTYVILLE, Ky.--Governor Steve Beshear joined with Department for Local Government Commissioner Tony Wilder and ConnectKentucky Executive Director René True today to announce the launch of the "Coal to Broadband: Making the Transition, Making the Connection," program, which will help bring broadband service to Breathitt, Estill, Lee and Powell counties.

"Through the work of Internet providers statewide and the Department for Local Government, Kentucky serves as a national model of how Internet access can enhance the quality of life for individuals, businesspeople and entire communities," said Gov. Beshear. "However, we still have room for improvement, especially in our rural areas. Through the launch of the 'Coal to Broadband' program, the Commonwealth is moving one step closer toward ensuring that every Kentuckian has readily available online access."

ConnectKentucky will serve as technical adviser on the project, working with the newly formed nonprofit, the Breathitt, Estill, Lee, Powell Regional Technology Authority (RTA).

"ConnectKentucky is proud to be joining Governor Beshear and the Department for Local Government in the announcement of the 'Coal to Broadband' project. This project is going to help bring high-speed Internet service to families and businesses in four counties where it is desperately needed and will play an important role in diversifying the region's economy," said René True, Executive Director of ConnectKentucky.

"Providing the tools and resources necessary for all Kentuckians to succeed in this global economy is an utmost priority," said Commissioner Tony Wilder. "With the enhanced Internet access from the 'Coal to Broadband' program, we will not

only be providing economic possibilities, but a whole new means by which people can achieve personal growth through increased educational opportunities.”

All four of the grant’s impacted counties are in the bottom 25 counties in Kentucky for broadband availability. Breathitt and Lee counties are the two lowest served counties in the state, both with below 50 percent availability of broadband to the home. What’s more, nearly 7,000 homes in Breathitt, Estill, Lee and Powell counties do not have high-speed Internet available at home.

“Coal to Broadband” will help ensure that these counties move toward more accessible and widespread broadband connections. The program will use multi-county coal severance dollars along with Appalachian Regional Commission funds for an economic development project to bring broadband access to the four county Eastern Kentucky region.

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Photo Information:

CKY1: *Kentucky Governor Steve Beshear presents a check to Chip Spann, René True and Mark Messer of ConnectKentucky during the “Coal to Broadband” launch on Tuesday.*

CKY2: *Kentucky Governor Steve Beshear presents a check to members of the Breathitt, Estill, Lee, Powell Regional Technology Authority (RTA) and René True of ConnectKentucky during the “Coal to Broadband” launch on Tuesday.*

About ConnectKentucky: ConnectKentucky is leading the way into a new economy for Kentuckians. As an independent technology-based economic development organization, ConnectKentucky works to ensure that Kentucky remains the place of choice to live, work and raise a family. ConnectKentucky is an alliance of technology-minded businesses, government entities and universities working together to accelerate technology in the Commonwealth.

About Regional Technology Authority: The Regional Technology Authority is a four-county non-profit consortium formed to foster broadband and technology availability and adoption to improve the economic conditions and quality of life in the counties of Breathitt, Estill, Lee and Powell. The Authority is taking the lead to identify funding sources to facilitate the deployment and operation of a four-county broadband network.