



UPCOUNTRY FIBER TO BRING BROADBAND INTERNET TO 8,200 MORE CUSTOMERS THROUGH AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT GRANT

Pickens, SC – February 02, 2023 - [Upcountry Fiber](#), the internet service provider created by utility cooperatives [Blue Ridge Electric Co-op](#) (BREC) and [WCFIBER](#), a subsidiary of [West Carolina Rural Telephone Cooperative](#) (WCTEL), has been awarded a \$24 million grant from American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds Appropriation Bill to help bridge the “digital divide” where little to no access exists. Approximately 8,200 new customers in rural and underserved areas of Oconee and Pickens counties will have access to high-speed fiber internet service by the end of 2023.

Specifically, Upcountry Fiber will build out its network in these areas:

- Oconee County – Coneross, Fair Play, Long Creek, Mountain Rest, Oakway, and Toccoa Highway in Westminster
- Pickens County – Rocky Bottom area in Northern Pickens County above Highway 11 and Shady Grove area in Pickens

“We are very thankful that our legislators have ensured rural and underserved communities in Oconee and Pickens Counties have even more potential for competitive growth by allocating funds to build out this necessary utility service,” said Jim Lovinggood, chief executive officer of BREC.

“This is a win for everyone. This not only benefits people in their homes but makes it possible for them to have access to better healthcare, education and job opportunities,” said Jeff Wilson, president and CEO of WCFIBER.

Separate from the ARPA grant, Upcountry Fiber is also continuing to build out its network in portions of Salem in Oconee County and Northern Greenville County. Since its public launch in June 2021, Upcountry Fiber has completed more than 1,600 miles of high-speed fiber in Pickens and Oconee, with 8,000 households, businesses and schools served. The majority of these are in rural and underserved rural areas.

About Upcountry Fiber

[Upcountry Fiber](#) is a high-speed fiber internet provider to the five counties of Anderson, Greenville, Oconee, Pickens, and Spartanburg. Established in Fall 2020, Upcountry Fiber is the product of a partnership between [Blue Ridge Electric Cooperative](#) and [WCFIBER](#), a subsidiary of [West Carolina Rural Telephone Cooperative](#) (WCTEL). Founded by organizations created to electrify and connect rural areas of South Carolina; decades later, Upcountry Fiber’s mission is to bridge the digital divide. Offering symmetrical internet speeds up to 1 Gbps over a fiber network, Upcountry Fiber has the fastest and most reliable high-speed internet in the area. To learn more about Upcountry Fiber, visit us at www.UpcountryFiber.com.

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