

Media Release

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County of Bland residents asked to help identify areas in need of broadband

BLACKSBURG, VA- The County of Bland and the Bland County Wireless Authority are joining with other Virginia counties to map broadband availability by starting their own local Internet speed testing campaign. Residents with Internet access are asked to take the [Accelerate Virginia speed test](#) to help identify areas in the county in need of better access to high-speed Internet services.

The Accelerate Virginia Internet speed test is a short and simple online survey and speed test that measures the overall quality and performance of your Internet connection. Upon completion of the speed test users will receive performance details regarding their Internet connection, as well as a comparison summary based on other speed test results in your community.

To participate in the County of Bland Internet speed testing campaign, all residents with Internet access are asked to visit <http://acceleratevirginia.org/speedtest> and take the two-minute speed test from their home computers. Accelerate Virginia also encourages business owners to take the speed test from their business locations. Everyone is asked to spread the word and encourage friends and neighbors to participate.

Because numerous, often temporary factors affect connection speed, you may want to take the speed test more than once, at different dates and times. The average of those readings will present the most reliable overall measure of your connection capabilities. When you connect to the Internet, the speeds that you will experience will vary based on a variety of factors, including:

- the configuration of the computer you are testing from,
- your home networking configuration,
- the number of computers and other networked equipment using the available bandwidth at the same time a speed test is being run – for the best results do not download/upload movies, music, photos etc while running any Internet speed test,
- network or Internet congestion - different times of the day are busier than others,
- server and router speeds of the websites you access,
- the condition of the wiring at your location.

The Accelerate Virginia campaign's goal is to collect 300-500 speed tests per county. The data will provide county officials with a more accurate understanding of broadband availability, as well as identify areas of potential need for improved services. The more participation we have the better the assessment will be for the County of Bland.

Often referred to as high-speed Internet service, broadband makes possible videoconferencing, Internet phone (VoIP), streaming media, interactivity, and real-time online consultation. Broadband allows faster and richer interactions between citizens and government, businesses and customers, educators and students, libraries and patrons, and families and friends. Broadband empowers Bland County residents to launch businesses, work from home, expand their studies, pay bills, conduct research, complete homework, play games and be entertained, exchange e-mails or photos, even stay connected through social networks like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.

By improving communication and the flow of information, broadband creates jobs, decreases health care costs, reduces miles driven and fossil fuels consumed, expands consumer choices, improves competition, and entertains more people for less cost. Broadband is the backbone of a high skill, high tech economy, and can lead to a better life for everyone in Virginia.

Accelerate Virginia was launched in 2010 as an extension of the Virginia Tech eCorridors program and is responsible for the collection of consumer broadband availability data for Virginia's broadband mapping initiative. By participating in the Bland County Internet speed testing campaign you will be getting real-time information about the quality of your Internet connection, a comparison summary of what others in your community are reporting, including provider names, connection types, speed averages and satisfaction ratings, and better awareness about the speed you need to access content and services you want. You will also be contributing information that will support Virginia's effort to accurately map current broadband availability across the state that will be used to help drive future policy decisions and to assist the local Wireless Authority in obtaining future funding and services to areas of need in the County of Bland.

If you cannot receive high speed Internet services at your address, please register your broadband dead zone at: <http://www.broadband.gov/qualitytest/deadzone/>. Internet access is available at the public library in Bland, the Learning Center in Mechanicsburg, and at the various hot spots located throughout the County of Bland. If you have questions, want more Information about Accelerate Virginia, or do not have internet access to report your broadband dead zone, please contact Jean Plymale, vplymale@vt.edu at (540) 231-2270.

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