

Media Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BLAND COUNTY ON THE CUTTING EDGE OF TECHNOLOGY ~ Bland County to be the 1st in Southwest Virginia to deliver Free Wireless Broadband Internet Access using the latest in Mesh Network Technology ~

(Bland, Virginia) – April 21, 2006, The Bland County Board of Supervisors are making investments that will lead the way for all of Southwest Virginia in technology and innovation. The quaint and beautiful town of Bland will be the first community in Southwest Virginia, and one of only three in the Commonwealth, to launch wireless internet access free to its citizens and visitors using the latest in broadband deployment technology. This new technology is called Mesh Networking and is considered to be the industry's most sophisticated and intelligent Wi-Fi system.

Phase I of the County's Mesh Network system will be deployed throughout downtown Bland and will be available free to citizens, business patrons, visitors and the general public. "This offering will be a valuable tool to increase traffic to the downtown area and ideally to our local businesses. Bland residents, individuals enjoying our community parks, patrons at our downtown eateries, Appalachian Trail hikers, Interstate travelers passing through, as well as professionals here on business, will utilize this free service and find even greater reason to spend more time in Bland", stated David Dillow, Chariman, Bland County Economic Development Authority.

This next-generation technology will provide the county with more than just a public and residential wireless application, but may, in the near future, have police and public safety roles as well as public utility and business functions. "What makes this project so exciting is that it has potential to benefit every facet of the county. Not only residents, businesses and visitors, but the public safety and utility applications could mean that we could more efficiently and effectively provide greater services to our citizens", stated Henry Blessing, Chairman, Bland County Board of Supervisors.

The external equipment being installed to make this system work will be rugged, weatherized modules (antenna routers) to be placed on the County's communications tower in the center of town. One of the greatest benefits of this

system is its expansion capabilities. “Because the system is completely wireless, we can take this network anywhere in the county where power is available...Basically, all that is required to expand the system is the installation of additional routers in the community on light polls, water tanks, or tall buildings”, stated Chris Sutphin, the County’s Information Technology Professional.

This latest initiative will only compliment the many investments we are making throughout the county. Some of these investments include a new 22-acre commerce park, multiple water & sewer infrastructure extension and development projects, downtown beautification and improvements, community park projects and tourism development. “The local government leadership believes in Bland County and they want to make it an even better place to live, work and raise a family. It is important that we seize viable opportunities that present themselves and continue to invest in our future...The potential of Bland County is limitless, and this wireless broadband project is just the beginning”, remarked Jonathan D. Sweet, County Administrator.

Phase II is still being developed and will be determined mainly by evaluating the success of the system’s initial deployment. The County awarded a contract to Trificient Technologies Inc., out of Mount Airy, NC, to install the system’s hardware. The installation is planned for completion on Monday, May 1st, and the County intends to have the system go live on Thursday, May 4th, 2006. The only other jurisdictions in the Commonwealth currently using this technology are the City of Fairfax and the County of Arlington.

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