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VIRGINIA RESIDENTS CONTRIBUTE TO BROADBAND MAP

An innovative **broadband mapping application** developed by Virginia Tech faculty members continues to receive national attention as the federal government identifies high-speed Internet access as a critical tool for helping to jump start the economy.

eCorridors -- founded in 2000 by Erv Blythe, vice president for information technology, and led by Brenda van Gelder, executive director of converged technologies for security, safety, and resilience -- initially created a map of community broadband in 2006 to allow Blacksburg, Va., residents to compare the Internet speeds offered by providers.



The Accelerate Virginia campaign will rely on residents' input to construct a map of broadband availability in Virginia.

After the map's release, eCorridors received numerous requests from state agencies in Virginia, North Carolina, and Alaska, as well as national broadband mapping projects, to adapt elements of its speed test and mapping tools.

"Our application is generally recognized across the nation as the first to integrate Web-based mapping with network performance measurement for the purpose of producing volunteered geographic information that can be analyzed spatially as a 'map' of the Internet," said Seth Peery, senior GIS (geographic information systems) architect of eCorridors.

THE LINK TO ECONOMIC GROWTH

Interest in broadband mapping spread to a wider audience in spring 2010, after the federal government released the **National Broadband Plan**. Created under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, the plan proposes increasing broadband access to help stimulate business development and job creation.



Many communities are investing in fiber optic infrastructure. This generation of broadband technology uses light waves to transmit information across networks for superior Internet connection speeds.

The growing recognition of broadband as a driver of economic opportunity and growth, as well as other community benefits, prompted eCorridors' leaders to launch the **Accelerate Virginia** campaign, a statewide expansion of the broadband mapping project accompanied by a consumer education program.

But broadband goes beyond just stimulating the economy. The National Broadband Plan states that every American should have access to affordable high-speed Internet service. That access is critical for many human services, including health care, education, public safety, and local government.

"Over the past decade in working with Virginia regions and communities in the broadband and technology areas, it is clear that broadband access is critical to the economic development, quality of life, education, and health care needs of our citizens and business community," van Gelder said. "This campaign to assess the quality and availability of broadband connectivity will lead to direct benefits for all Virginians."



High-speed Internet access is critical for many public services, such as health care, education, public safety and local government.

CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT

eCorridors' strategy of going directly to consumers for an assessment of their Internet availability and performance is different because providers have traditionally been the only sources of such information and do not typically make it publicly available. Accelerate Virginia participants are given the opportunity to run an Internet speed test and provide an evaluation of their current service.

In return, they receive a detailed review of their broadband connection and a summary of what others in their community are reporting about their service, including provider names, connection types, speed averages, and satisfaction ratings.

Combined with other data sources, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration will use the Accelerate Virginia speed test data to update Virginia's state broadband map of served, underserved, and unserved areas, as well as to validate providers' claimed coverage areas. This data will be used to identify areas in need of broadband infrastructure investment.

GRASS-ROOTS MOVEMENT

To build a sufficiently large sample of residential speed tests, eCorridors is looking to obtain at least 300 speed test data points per county. The Accelerate Virginia campaign is targeting planners, educators, community leaders, student groups, and individuals across the state, educating them about the need for investment in broadband infrastructure, and recruiting them to help run mapping campaigns in their communities.

Campaign resources, such as fact sheets, brochures, door tags, and informational videos will be available for public distribution. Training workshops are also being planned to help communities carry out successful mapping campaigns. Social media sites, such as **Twitter** and **YouTube**, are being used to help users share the news about the Accelerate Virginia campaign within their own social networks.



The eCorridors team has been collecting Internet connectivity data since 2006 through a community broadband access map. This research served as the basis for the new Accelerate Virginia broadband mapping application. From left are Jarrod Rife, Patrick Fay, Jean Plymale, Brenda van Gelder, and Seth Peery.

"The Accelerate Virginia campaign is a consumer driven, grass-roots approach for engaging and educating the public," said Jean Plymale, who works in applications research and development for eCorridors.

"I urge everyone to participate by running a speed test and contributing other service details to the Accelerate Virginia broadband mapping campaign," Plymale said. "We have a responsibility to understand what kind of Internet services are available in Virginia."

- *For more information on this topic, contact **Jean Plymale** at (540) 231-2270.*

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PARTICIPATE WITH ACCELERATE VIRGINIA



By running the Accelerate Virginia speed test, you will receive an instant review of your current broadband speed connection and see of what others in your communities are reporting.

- > [Watch a tutorial](#) about the speed test
- > [Run a speed test](#)

Get involved with the Accelerate Virginia campaign by running a speed testing campaign in your community.

- > [Here's how](#)

THE ECORRIDORS PROGRAM

eCorridors is an outreach program founded in 2000 and led by Virginia Tech's information technology division. Its mission is to facilitate the development of advanced network infrastructure throughout Virginia.

eCorridors provides information to communities about options for high-speed communication technologies and the incentives for network development. In doing so, the program contributes to the state's economic growth by allowing businesses and organizations to acquire and maintain a competitive advantage.

DID YOU KNOW?

Seth Peery, the senior GIS architect of **eCorridors**, in collaboration with the **Measurement Lab**, provided technical assistance to the Federal Communication Commission during the development of its **broadband quality test** application. At the request of Virginia's former secretary of technology, Aneesh Chopra, Peery and the eCorridors team also developed customized speed test applications for Virginia's **public schools** and **libraries**.

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