



Media Contact:  
Liz Smith, Marketing Manager  
434-570-1312  
[liz@mbc-va.com](mailto:liz@mbc-va.com)

## **MBC Lights First Segments of Broadband Stimulus Network, Brings High-Speed Connectivity to Southern Virginia Schools**

*Franklin and Cumberland County Schools Open with Faster Broadband this Month*

**South Boston, VA. – Aug. 29, 2011** –Mid-Atlantic Broadband Cooperative (MBC), a leading open access middle-mile wholesale broadband provider, announced today that teachers and students in two rural Virginia school districts are benefiting from new high-speed broadband connections.

Franklin County and Cumberland County school districts opened their doors this month to K-12 students with classrooms equipped with high speed internet access for the first time.

In February last year, MBC was awarded a \$16 million grant to connect 121 K-12 schools in Southern Virginia by the U.S. Commerce Department's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) as well as a \$4 million matching grant from the Virginia Tobacco Commission. MBC began construction in March this year of over 400 miles of new fiber optic infrastructure. Local telecommunications provider Shentel is providing the local service to both school districts.

### **"Teachers and Students are Smiling"**

School administrators in Franklin and Cumberland Counties praised the new capabilities enabled by high-speed broadband and the opportunities they provide to improve the quality of education for their students. "We are excited that we were able to take our campus from 45 Megabits per second (Mbps) to 100 Mbps through Shentel and MBC's network," said Dr. Amy Griffin, Superintendent, Cumberland County Schools. "This transition allows us to video stream without buffering, improves online collaboration, and provides the opportunity for future virtual classrooms. MBC has helped us with an infrastructure that will assist in providing the best education to our students that will prepare them to participate fully in today's global, digital society."

"Franklin County Schools is one of the top school systems in Virginia and one of the top school systems in the nation," said Dr. Charles Lackey, Superintendent, Franklin County Public Schools. "Year after year we perform higher than similar school systems and school systems larger than our own in a number of academic and athletic areas. As we have emerged in recent years to the point that most of our academic and administrative computer applications are web based, we are now tapping into our Internet resources at a level never before seen in this district. The network provided by MBC and Shentel, supported by the federal rural broadband grant, will enable us to obtain a significant yet affordable increase in our Internet bandwidth. This will go far toward enabling us to provide a less restrictive and positive experience in using available technology for children in all of our schools. We don't plan to lose our recognition as one of the best among the best. This increased Internet bandwidth will help us retain that status on into the near and far future."

"I'm proud of the work our project team has accomplished in completing the first segments of our broadband stimulus project, on-time and on-budget," said Tad Deriso, MBC president and CEO. "It's refreshing to see positive news around Federal stimulus infrastructure investments, and we appreciate the support of our members and our communities."

"Shentel is pleased to provide connectivity to support education at Franklin and Cumberland County schools, and MBC has been an excellent partner, providing the support and facilities we need," said Shentel Vice President of Sales and Marketing Willy Pirtle.

"I congratulate Mid-Atlantic Broadband Cooperative on its efforts to expand broadband service throughout Virginia," Senator Mark Warner (D-VA) said. "This is a great first step to help connect all of our schools in the Commonwealth to high-speed Internet, which will help spur investment in rural Virginia."

Virginia Delegate Tommy Wright (R – 61<sup>st</sup> District), Commissioner for the Virginia Tobacco Commission, stated, "I am delighted that MBC and the Virginia Tobacco Commission are partnering together to help enhance the educational experiences of students in our region. This initiative is right on target with the Tobacco Commission's vision of regional transformation to increase educational opportunities for the citizens of Southern Virginia."

"This Recovery Act investment in broadband infrastructure will not only bring new educational opportunities to students in rural Virginia and better prepare them to succeed in the 21st century economy, but it will also provide a platform for greater economic growth in the region," said NTIA Administrator Lawrence E. Strickling.

#### **About MBC**

The Mid-Atlantic Broadband Cooperative (MBC) owns and operates an advanced open-access fiber optic backbone network that provides wholesale optical transport services, collocation, dark fiber, and tower construction/leasing. Over 60 private sector telecom providers are members of MBC. They use MBC's open access network to expand their network reach, reduce their transport costs, enable new services and applications, and drive advanced broadband services in Southern Virginia. MBC's mission is economic development, job creation, and private sector investment in Southern Virginia. For more information about MBC, visit [www.mbc-va.com](http://www.mbc-va.com).

###