

# ROANOKE VALLEY BROADBAND AUTHORITY

P.O. Box 2569, Roanoke, VA 24010  
[www.highspeedroanoke.net](http://www.highspeedroanoke.net)

## MEMBERS:

Kevin Boggess, City of Salem  
Clay Goodman, Roanoke County  
Kathleen Guzi, Botetourt County  
Mike McEvoy, Citizen  
Chris Morrill, City of Roanoke

March 5, 2014

## Letter – Expression of Interest VIA ECFS

Chairman Thomas Wheeler  
Commissioner Mignon Clyburn  
Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel  
Commissioner Ajit Pai  
Commissioner Michael O’Rielly  
Jonathan Chambers  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street, SW 20024  
Washington, DC

## RE: Expression of Interest – Rural Broadband Experiments Connect America Fund, WC Docket No. 10-90

Dear Chairman Wheeler, Commissioners, and Mr. Chambers,

The Roanoke Valley Broadband Authority is expressing interest in participating in the Rural Broadband Experiments announced at the January 30<sup>th</sup> FCC Open Meeting. While we do not have specific projects to propose, we take this opportunity to document our region’s need for high-speed, affordable Internet service. We respectfully ask the Federal Communications Commission to consider our area’s need when making decisions regarding the Rural Broadband Trials and any future initiatives related to the Connect America Fund.

### Background

The Roanoke Valley has a population of approximately 300,000 and has both urban and rural populations. The region has a diverse economy and serves as a retail and medical service hub for a large part of southwest Virginia. It is bisected by Interstate 81 and the Blue Ridge Parkway. Virginia Tech, one of Virginia’s major research institutions, is located just south of the Roanoke Valley. In recent years, open access fiber investments have brought fiber to many rural areas surrounding the Roanoke Valley. Despite existing private infrastructure in the urban core, there are still great needs for affordable high speed Internet in the region, especially in some of the rural areas. In 2012, four local governments conducted a study that resulted in the formation of the Roanoke Valley Broadband Authority in 2014. One of the first tasks of the Authority is to identify achievable, cost effective projects that will solve some of the broadband deficiencies in the region. More information on the Broadband Authority and our 2012 Study can be found at [www.highspeedroanoke.net](http://www.highspeedroanoke.net).

## **Geographic Territory**

The Roanoke Valley Broadband Authority serves the counties of Botetourt and Roanoke, and the cities of Roanoke and Salem (map attached). Comprised of mountains and valleys, the region's topography creates pockets of low density development that are not served by higher speed wired infrastructure. Aggregation of customers is best achieved with disregard for political boundaries, thus the Authority is committed to reaching out to neighboring jurisdictions, providers and stakeholders such as Virginia Tech, Mid-Atlantic Broadband, Citizens Telephone, the Rockbridge Area Network Authority and the New River Valley Wireless Authority.

## **Proposed Technology**

The Roanoke Valley Broadband Authority believes that no one technology will serve our entire service area. Because of low population density and topography, a variety of solutions and partnerships will likely yield the best result. Using existing assets, such as tower sites, pole locations, public rights-of-way, and traditional infrastructure, the Authority would engage existing providers and utilities to identify rural corridors suitable for service upgrades. There are likely catalysts (such as public safety, education, and links to neighboring networks) that increase the success of enhancing broadband service to areas identified as deficient by the FCC (see attached map). We are also very interested in partnering with major research institutions to further research into new technologies.

## **Existing Providers**

Because part of the Roanoke Valley is an urbanized area, there are a number of existing providers in the region. These include Comcast, Cox, Verizon, Level 3, Zayo, Lumos, Mid-Atlantic Broadband, Citizens Telephone and others. In the urban area, cable companies are the typical provider with typical urban rates and speeds. DSL may be an option in some rural areas with pricing from \$20-\$30 per month. However, many rural areas in the region identified by the FCC (see attached map) do not have access to any Internet service. In fact, some regions do not even have cell phone service. The Authority also recognizes the need to work with non-traditional partners such as Appalachian Power, the Virginia Department of Transportation, Roanoke Gas, the Western Virginia Water Authority, and high bandwidth users such as Virginia Tech and the Virginia Tech and Carilion School of Medicine and Research Institute who often have a need for increased capacity and redundant networks.

## **Local Government Participation**

Because the Roanoke Valley Broadband Authority authorized this letter of intent, all four jurisdictions (Botetourt County, Roanoke County, the City of Salem and the City of Roanoke) would likely participate in the experiments with yet to be identified partners. Additionally, the Broadband Authority will have an advisory committee representing our broad stakeholder community (higher education, secondary education, public safety, economic development, business, and community groups).

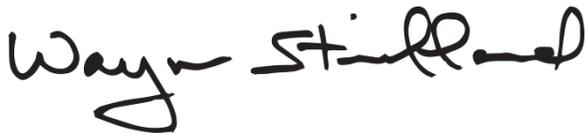
## **Anchor Institutions**

- Four Public Secondary School Systems
- Public Safety Facilities (Fire/Rescue/Police)
- Four Local Governments
- Roanoke College
- Hollins University
- Roanoke Higher Education Center
- Virginia Western Community College

Western Virginia Workforce Development Board  
Virginia Tech-Carilion School of Medicine and Research Institute  
Jefferson College of Health Sciences  
Carilion Clinic (2 hospitals and multiple small clinics)  
Lewis Gale Medical Center  
Veterans Administration-Salem VA Medical Center  
Virginia Tech Catawba Sustainability Center  
Catawba Hospital-Virginia Department of Behavioral Health  
Western Virginia Water Authority (smart meters)  
Multiple Call Centers/Business Parks/Large Businesses

Thank you for considering our Expression of Interest in your decisions about the amount of funding that will be allocated in the Rural Broadband Experiments. We commend the FCC in this effort to connect rural communities and are ready to help you close the digital divide.

Sincerely,

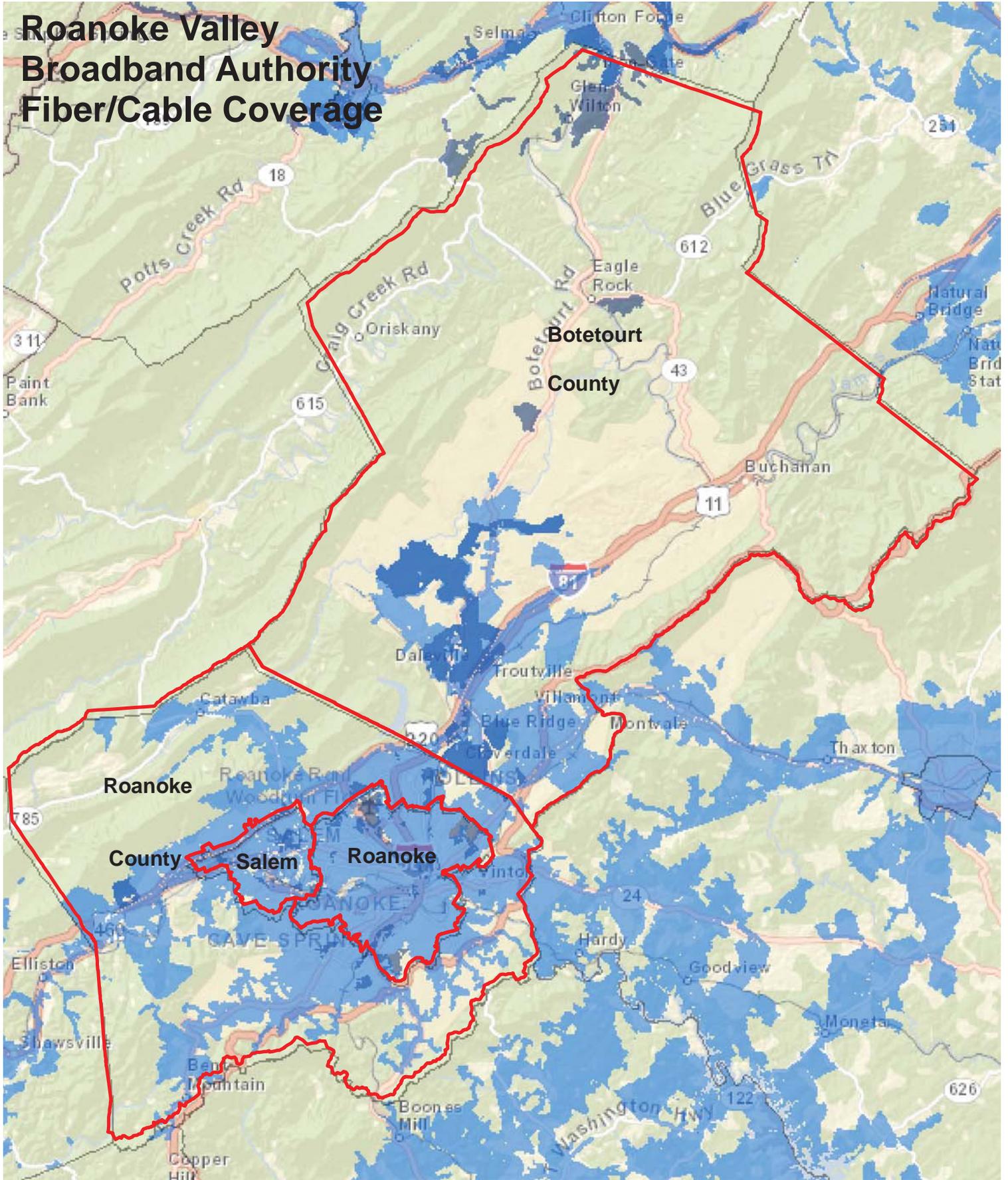
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wayne Strickland". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Wayne Strickland, Secretary,  
Roanoke Valley Broadband Authority

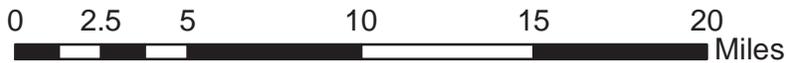
WS:jlj

Enclosures

# Roanoke Valley Broadband Authority Fiber/Cable Coverage

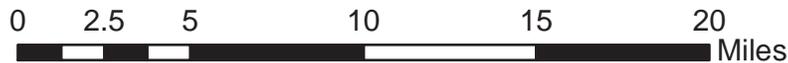
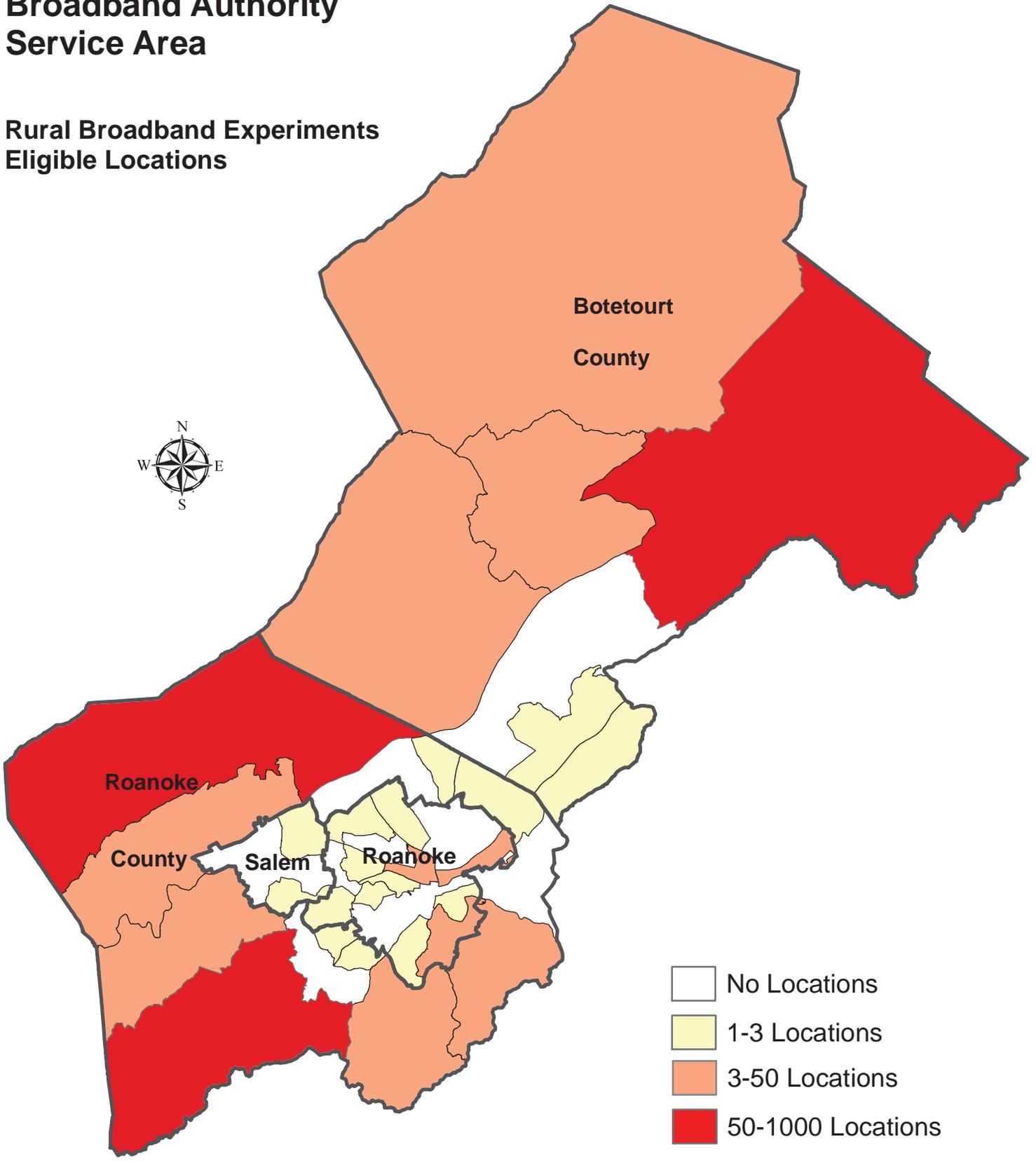


 Fiber or Cable Coverage

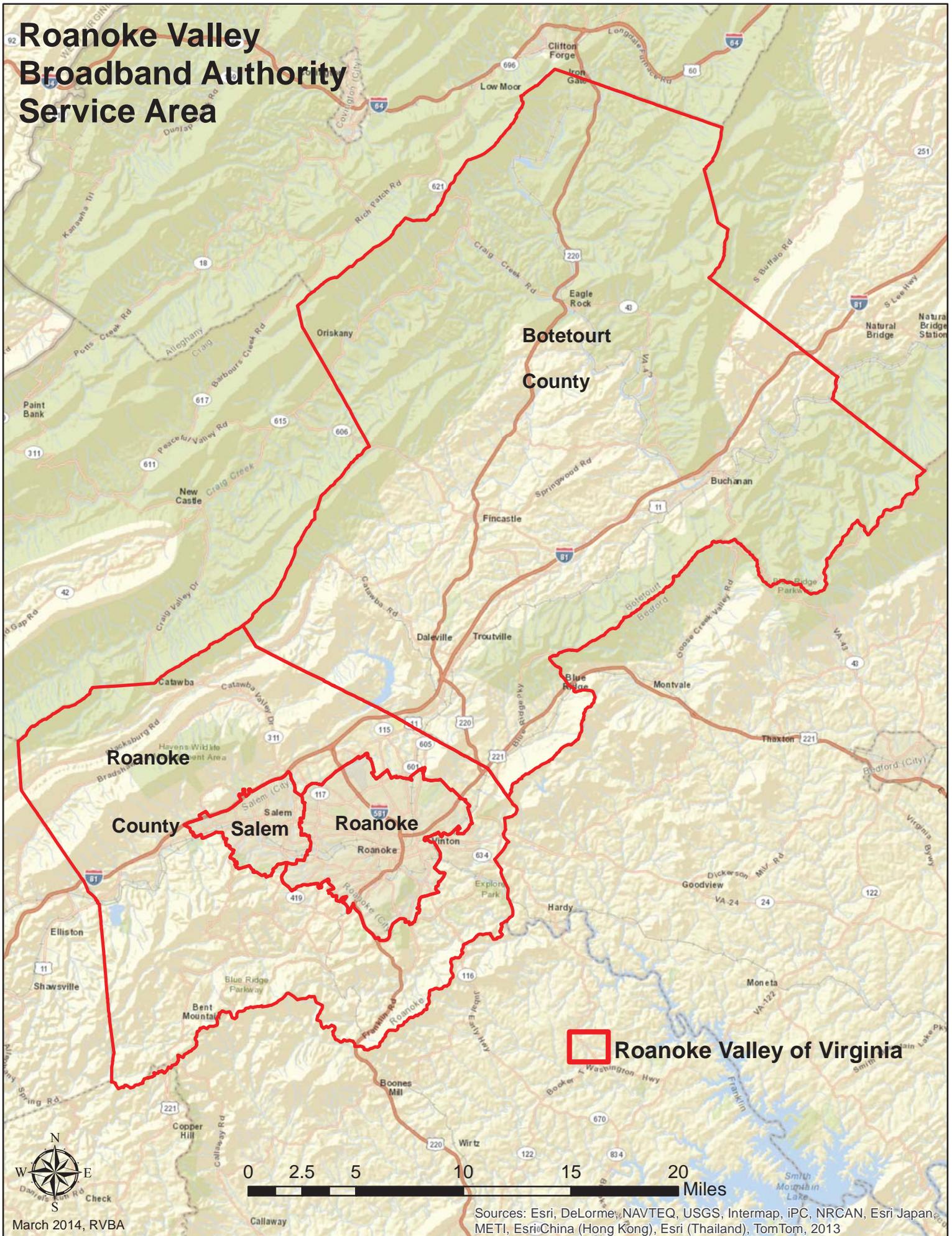


# Roanoke Valley Broadband Authority Service Area

## Rural Broadband Experiments Eligible Locations



# Roanoke Valley Broadband Authority Service Area



March 2014, RVBA

Sources: Esri, DeLorme, NAVTEQ, USGS, Intermap, iPC, NRCAN, Esri Japan, METI, EsriChina (Hong Kong), Esri (Thailand), TomTom, 2013