



Elected officials praise TruVista/Jackson EMC partnership to bring broadband to unserved Jackson, Banks and Madison counties

TruVista and their partners at the Jackson Electric Membership Corp. (EMC) received accolades from several elected officials including Georgia Governor Brian Kemp today for their combined efforts to deliver fiber broadband to 8,000 unserved and underserved homes and businesses in Jackson EMC's service area of Jackson, Banks, and Madison counties.

The collaboration means TruVista will install hundreds of miles of fiber-optic cable in the three-county service area, and they will manage accounts, customer service, and support requests from those new customers.

TruVista brought broadband services to Commerce, Georgia in October and acquired Plant Telecommunications in Southern Georgia in November, with top priority placed on providing quality broadband to as many unserved and underserved customers in rural Georgia as possible.

"This announcement is the latest in a long line of successful partnerships between EMCs across Georgia and private providers to increase internet access for our rural communities," said Gov. Kemp. "When I signed Senate Bill 2 in 2019, it opened the door for partnerships like this to provide broadband service.

"Now, 19 projects involving EMCs have led to 244,000 Georgians receiving broadband access, opening doors for all to pursue new economic, educational, and social opportunities."

The agreement between Jackson EMC and TruVista is the result of Senate Bill 2 passed in 2019, which allows electric membership cooperatives (EMCs) including Jackson EMC to provide broadband services or leverage EMC infrastructure in other ways to aid deployment of broadband.

TruVista is also taking advantage of the recent "One Buck Deal," decision made by the Georgia Public Service Commission requiring EMCs to give qualified broadband providers access to their utility poles for new attachments in unserved areas for \$1 per pole per year.

The rate is available to broadband providers for six years, which is an unprecedented incentive to promote high-speed internet expansion in areas that need broadband the most.

State Senators Steve Gooch and Frank Ginn jumped in with praise for the commitment as well.

"As the chief sponsor of Senate Bill 2, it is rewarding to see forward progress after years of hard work by private citizens, community leaders, lawmakers, and many others who love this great state," said Sen. Gooch. "I am thankful to Jackson EMC, TruVista, and the many other organizations who've partnered to make announcements over the past two and half years. These companies are putting people first, and our entire state will benefit from their leadership."

Ginn said, "As a former engineer with Jackson EMC, it is an honor to congratulate today's partnership that opens the doors for job creation in Jackson, Madison, and Banks counties. It is



essential for businesses to have access to high-speed internet in order to participate in today's economy."

Chip Jakins, president and CEO of Jackson EMC said access to broadband service is one of the top issues in their community.

"Whether it is students doing their classwork online or small businesses connecting to their customers around the world, broadband access for everyone is an important issue for us to tackle," Jakins said. "Electric cooperatives like Jackson EMC, are uniquely positioned to partner with broadband providers to provide reliable internet access to rural areas in Georgia. By welcoming TruVista to our service area, Jackson EMC is part of the solution to bring broadband to unserved homes and businesses in our community."

Carla French, president and CEO of TruVista said her company looks for every opportunity to bring best-in-class broadband services to rural households and businesses in and around its Georgia and South Carolina footprint.

"This partnership between TruVista and Jackson EMC will enable underserved residents of Jackson, Banks, and Madison counties to receive fast, reliable, and always on internet services in a much shorter time frame than would have been anticipated without this agreement."

Public Service Commissioner Lauren "Bubba" McDonald also applauded the significant investment TruVista and Jackson EMC are making in the community.

"This project is a great example of two separate companies working together to develop innovative solutions to ensure rural Georgians will have access to quality broadband service that their neighbors in nearby counties enjoy. This partnership is proof that recent efforts are making way for progress," said McDonald.

State Representative Chris Erwin added his congratulations to both TruVista and Jackson EMC.

"Broadband access is crucial to families and businesses in these three counties and after long searching for an answer, this project will ensure that our students, school systems, small businesses, and entire communities can prosper, no matter their location."

TruVista expects construction to be complete by the end of 2023 and will begin offering broadband service to Jackson EMC members in Jackson County as part of TruVista's commitment to the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund requirements.

Banks and Madison counties will soon follow.