



## BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM **Aiken Electric Cooperative**

Aiken Electric Cooperative (AEC) is a member-owned utility that strives to provide reliable, competitively priced energy and other services desired by its members. AEC serves over 49,000 customers in a nine-county area.

With four total projects, AEC received over \$550,000 in CARES Act funding to help expand broadband infrastructure in South Carolina.

AEC contracted McCall-Thomas Engineering to provide design and construction services for its projects. AEC used additional funding for its projects from Rural Utilities Services (RUS), which is a federal agency under the US Department of Agriculture. RUS provided a loan to AEC for the remainder of the project costs.

### **Impact to Community**

Receiving CARES Act funding allowed AEC to install infrastructure that delivers high-speed, fiber-based broadband to WiFi access points near six schools. The access points provide WiFi to the parking lots and areas near the schools. Parents without broadband can take their children to the school parking lot and use the free WiFi to facilitate distance learning.



“ We appreciate Aiken Electric Cooperative for reaching out to us to discuss how their fiber infrastructure upgrade, if planned in collaboration with our school district, could also serve to increase wireless internet access for many of Orangeburg’s students. Having additional access points helps ease internet connectivity challenges for all students and families, which is especially critical as we continue teaching and learning amidst the coronavirus pandemic. ”

*Dr. Shawn Foster  
Superintendent, Orangeburg County School District*

## **SUCCESS STORY**

### **AT A GLANCE**

**Number of Projects:** 4

**Total Project Cost:** \$1,392,161

**CARES Act Funding:** \$554,575

**Educational Institutions Passed\*:** 6

**Technology deployed:**  
Fiber to WiFi Access Points

**Maximum download/upload speeds:**  
1 Gbps/1 Gbps

*\*The location is eligible to subscribe to services.*



## Helping Consumers During COVID-19

Many students in the Aiken and Orangeburg County School Districts are attending classes virtually. High-speed internet allows students to continue learning while at home.

**AEC's CARES Act projects allow teachers to provide students with virtual learning opportunities.**

AEC installed fiber broadband to locations near six schools, allowing for the creation of outdoor WiFi networks at Busbee Elementary, Corbett Middle, Wagener-Salley High, Dover Elementary, North Middle/High, and Oakwood-Windsor Elementary School. Wi-Fi networks are also open to the public.

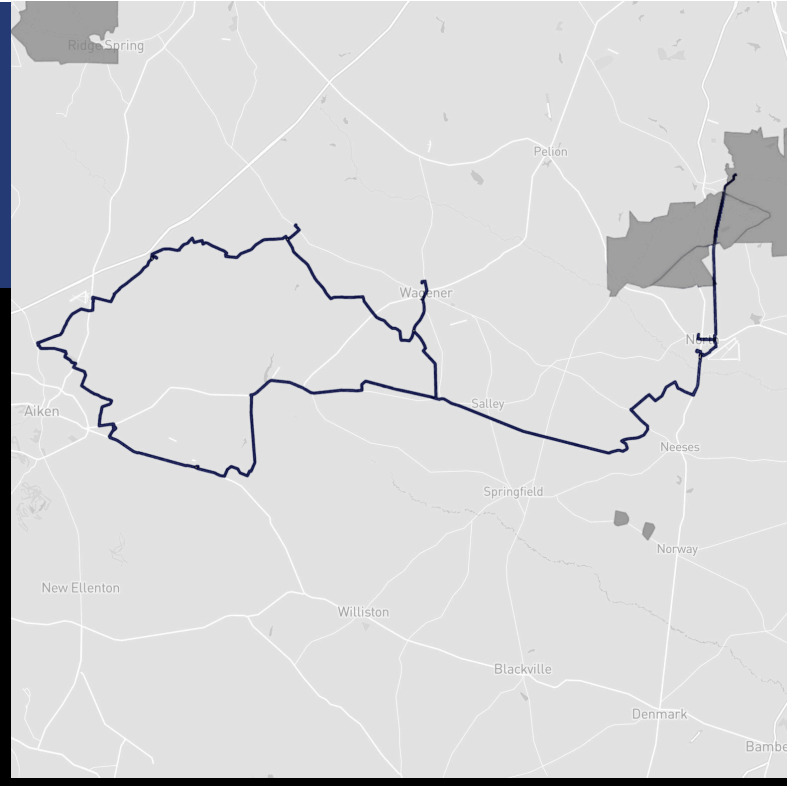
AEC's CARES Act projects allow teachers to provide students with virtual learning opportunities using high-speed internet, thereby reducing the risk of spreading the COVID-19 virus to others.



### Project Areas

Aiken Electric Cooperative projects were completed in the following counties:

- Aiken
- Orangeburg



### Average Cost

The average cost is determined by taking the total cost of the project and dividing by the number of locations. This is the average cost based on the amount of CARES Act funding received. There is no cost to consumers for this service. The public WiFi access is provided free of charge.

**Per Location Served: \$92,429.17**

### CARES Act

The South Carolina General Assembly passed Act 142 authorizing the ORS to expend up to \$50 million for broadband initiatives related to COVID-19. The expansion of broadband infrastructure emphasized services to rural communities and communities with a high prevalence of COVID-19 or with demographic characteristics consistent with risk factors for COVID-19.



### About the Office of Regulatory Staff

The ORS represents consumers of investor-owned utilities in South Carolina before the PSC. The PSC is the state agency that sets utilities' rates. The ORS must look at the impact to the consumer and utilities' continued investment in reliable and high-quality services.

