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# Fiber optic cable production getting a boost in Catawba County

Corning and CommScope are expanding their manufacturing operations, which includes new jobs and a renewed focus on rural broadband expansion.



## FIBER OPTIC PRODUCTION EXPANSION

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HICKORY, N.C. — The Biden-Harris administration's [Investing in America tour](#) continued Wednesday, this time in Hickory. There, two companies joined US [Secretary of Commerce](#) Gina Raimondo to announce expanded fiber optic cable manufacturing in the area.

[CommScope](#) and [Corning](#) both announced they will invest nearly \$550 million combined to build American-made fiber optic cables, with the aim of expanding access to broadband internet in rural areas. The investment also promises hundreds of new jobs in the Hickory and Catawba County area.



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“We have a tremendous opportunity not just to close the digital divide for millions of Americans, but also to revitalize domestic manufacturing industry, make more products and technologies in America, and create good manufacturing jobs here in Hickory and across the country,” Sec. Raimondo said. “President Biden has been clear that the [Bipartisan Infrastructure Law](#) is an opportunity to invest in America. With today’s announcements, that investment continues by producing the fiber we’re going to use to get everyone connected to the Internet right here in America with products made in America.”

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The law requires materials and products that are made in the US to be used for federally-funded infrastructure products, which includes high-speed internet deployment.

CommScope is pledging \$47 million for its expansion. The Commerce Department notes the facility in Catawba, North Carolina is already the largest hybrid-fiber-coaxial facility for

broadband networks globally, and will specifically produce a new fiber optic cable intended use in rural areas.

Corning, meanwhile, is planning to expand its manufacturing campus near Hickory, building the \$500 million invested in fiber and cable manufacturing since 2020. The company is also partnering with [NTCA - The Rural Broadband Association](#) to dedicate a portion of the cable manufactures to small, rural providers and co-ops as part of expanding broadband access.



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**Governor Roy Cooper**

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From telemedicine and remote work to education and small businesses, high-speed internet access is essential. Today, Gov. Cooper and [@SecRaimondo](#) joined CommScope in Catawba to announce new fiber-optic cable production that will strengthen broadband access in rural communities.

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CommScope and Corning's announcement Thursday is part of the Biden-Harris administration's larger \$65 billion Internet for All initiative, which aims to close the digital divide in the US. A publication, about 24 million households across the country lack internet access.



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The [National Telecommunications and Information Administration](#) is tasked with tackling the divide with \$48 billion in grant programs to fund planning, infrastructure deployment, and adoption programs nationwide.

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Alan Davidson, the assistant secretary of commerce for communications and information, is also an NTIA administrator and said Wednesday's announcement signals a shift forward.

“We’ve been talking about the digital divide in this country for decades. Now, thanks to President Biden’s Internet for All initiative, we finally have the resources to do something serious about it,” he said. “CommScope and Corning’s announcements today will help ensure we have the fiber we need to build affordable, reliable high-speed Internet networks. Our focus at NTIA is on deploying these networks, and investing in American jobs and manufacturing in the process.”

Alexa Stewart is a Librarian at Conover Branch Library. She said many in the town have difficulties accessing reliable Wi-Fi. She said she and others are excited about the expansion specifically because of the opportunity it will create.

Right now, the library is filled daily with those who don't have access.

"We have kids all the time, they have a chrome book, and we help them connect," Stewart said. "How are they supposed to do their school work if they can't get connection?"



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