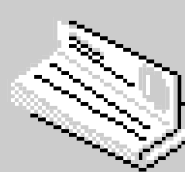
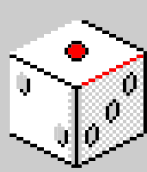
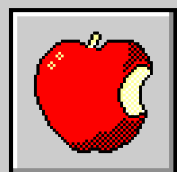


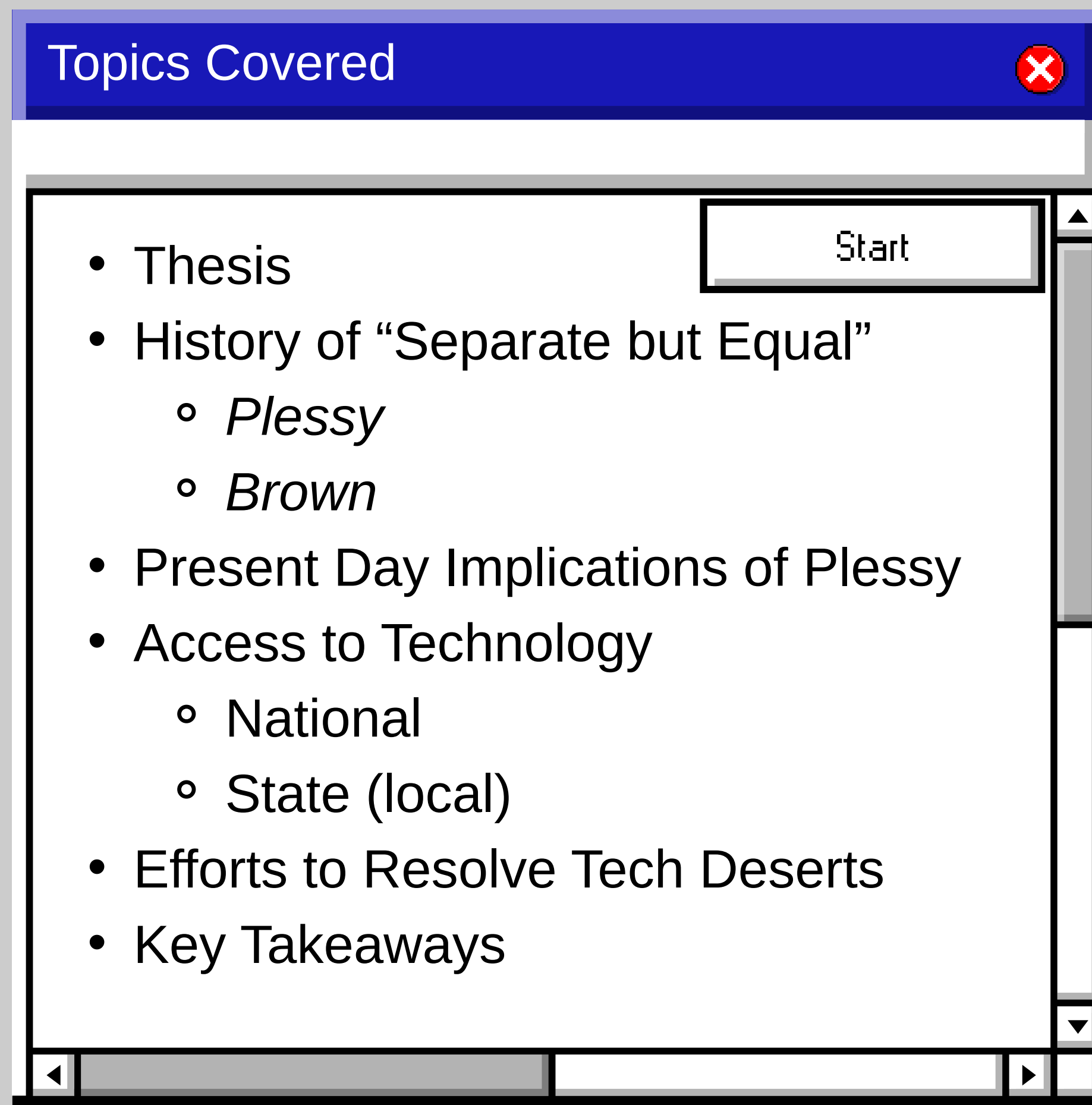
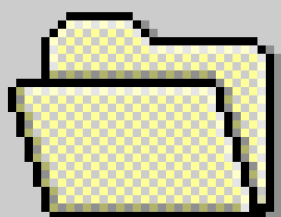
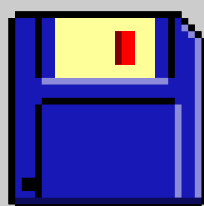
Virginia's Technology Deserts: An Overview of *Plessy*



What is a technology desert?

- “[A] lack of access to technology was soon found to affect not just rural Americans, but BIPOC communities, women, and the elderly because of systemic differences in wealth, infrastructure and cultural attitudes.”
 - “technology” = broadband, computers, etc.
- (Uni. of Michigan Center for Social Solution)





Thesis



- *Plessy*'s "separate but equal" doctrine lives on in the form of technology deserts.
- There is not a realistic solution to technology deserts under present-day systems
 - Ongoing impact on Black K-12 students



History

PLESSY V. FERGUSON (1896)



- Post-Reconstruction
 - Death of the Civil Rights Act (1875)
 - Jim Crow era
- Separate Car Act (1890)
- Black mobilization: Citizens' Committee to Test the Constitutionality of the Separate Car Law
- *Plessy*

Plessy & Public Schools

- “Laws permitting, and even requiring, their separation in places where they are liable to be brought into contact do not necessarily imply the inferiority of either race to the other, and have been generally, if not universally, recognized as within the competency of the state legislatures in the exercise of their police power. The most common instance of this is connected with the establishment of separate schools for white and colored children, which has been held to be a valid exercise of the legislative power even by courts of States where the political rights of the colored race have been longest and most earnestly enforced.” *Plessy* (1896)

**Brown v.
Board I
(1954)**

Brown I: Overview Nationally

- Reality
- Inequity.
 - Odds were stacked against them.
 - See:

Little Rock 9 (Alabama)

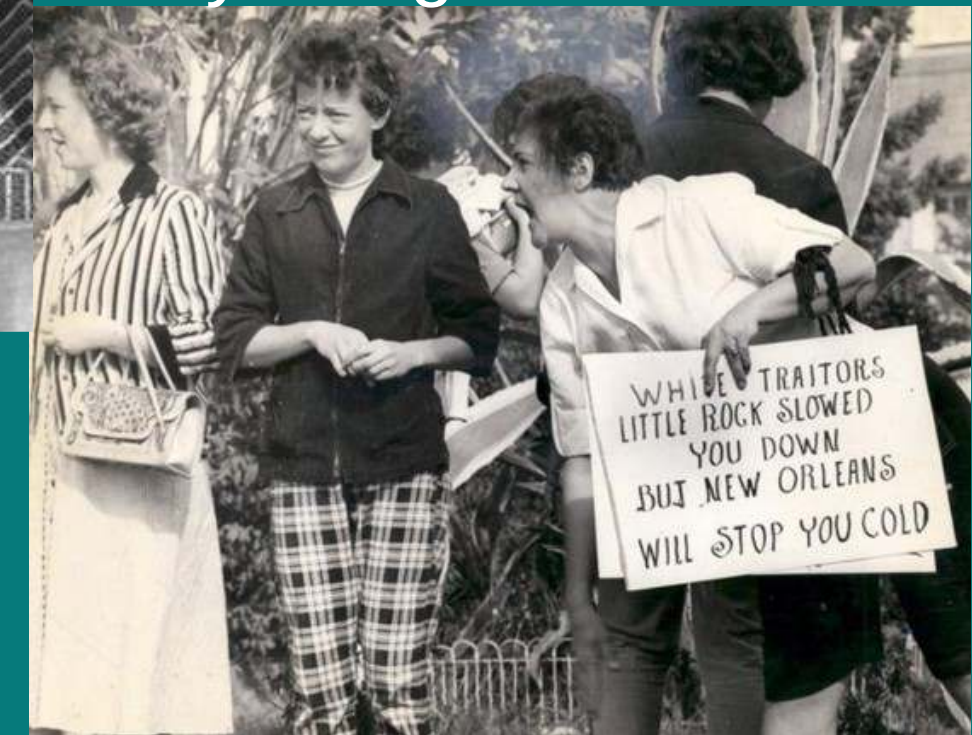
Ruby Bridges (Louisiana)

Mansfield High Mobs (Texas)



Mansfield Mob

Ruby Bridges' Protesters



Brown I: In Virginia

- Integration in Virginia still under-researched
- Brunswick 15
 - “I was verbally abused every day I attended Brunswick High School.” - Marvin Jones Sr.
 - (McQuade 2023)
- Rise in “Freedom of Choice”



Courtesy of the Brunswick 15 Facebook page

Brown I: Locally

The Hanover 8 (Lee-Davis and Patrick Henry)

One year after integrating to Hanover schools, a Black student committed suicide.

Continuous lack of resources (see e.g., transportation; buying buses with private funds)

**Present
Day**

Access to Technology Today: The U.S.

- Nationally: (National Urban League 2024)
- Race and rural-status
 - “36 percent of Americans living in rural areas of the United States lack high-speed home internet and 14 percent don’t have a computer”
 - “nearly 31 percent of Black households are without high-speed home internet and 17 percent have no computer;”

Access to Technology Today: VA

- Virginia overall:
 - **“Nearly one in four people, or 23.1 percent, of racial and ethnic minorities did not have high-speed internet at home.”** (American Immigration Council)
- Virginia K-12 students:
 - No Wi-Fi - 14% overall
 - No computers - 12% overall
 - Black and Latinx students hit the hardest
 - “Black and Latino student households each are more than two times likely to lack a computer or laptop in the home than white students. ” (Allison 2020)



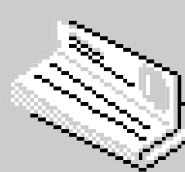
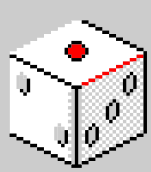
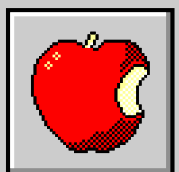
Access to Technology Today: A Survey of Hanover County, Virginia



Interview

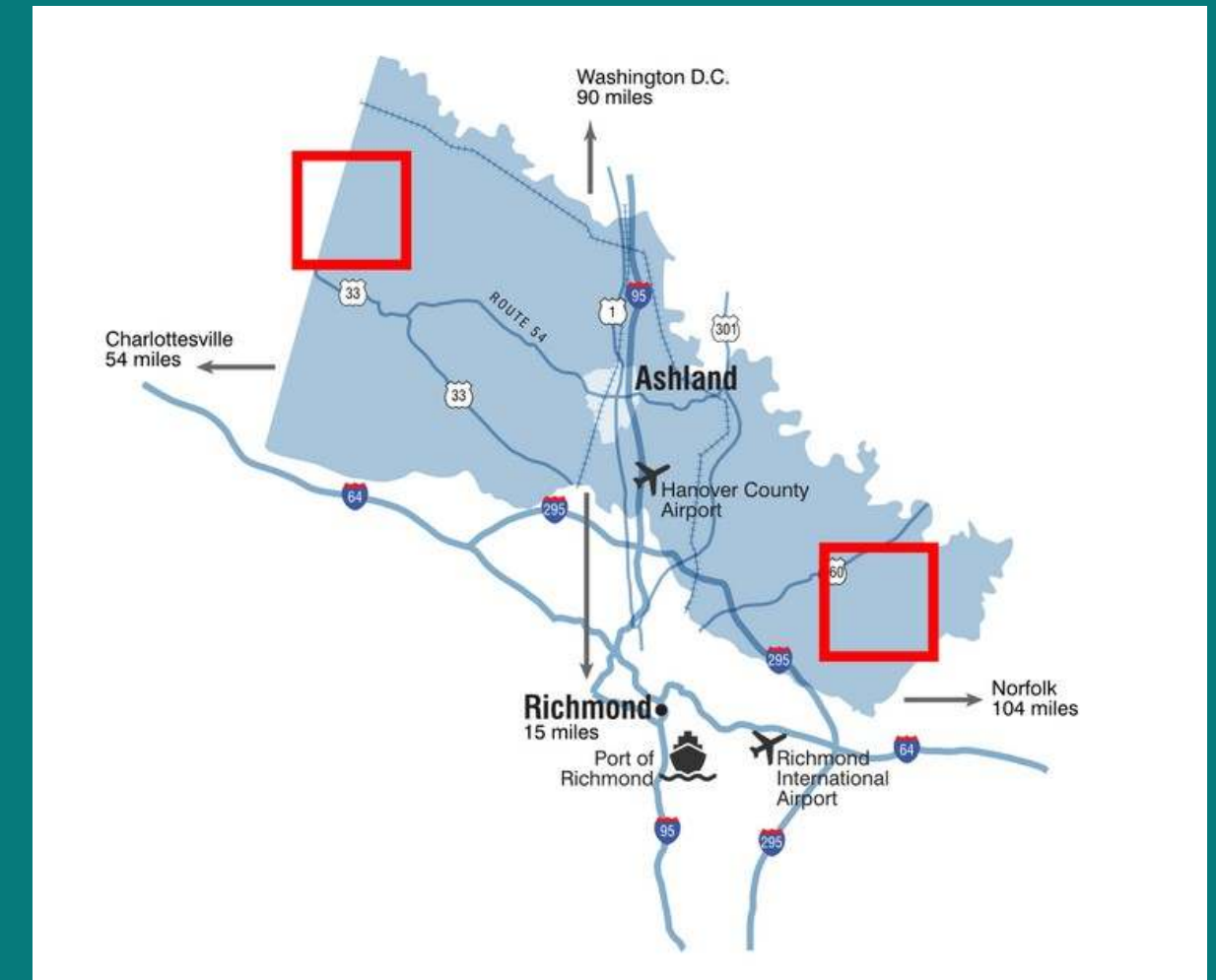


- Interview with Ms. Patricia Hunter-Jordan
- Local Civil Rights Leader and Advocate
- President of the Hanover NAACP
- Active in the Hanover County School system
- Knowledgeable about local school board policies
- Lifelong Virginia resident



Tech deserts today

- Eastern and Western areas of the county
 - Montpelier
 - Old Church
- COVID
 - Public libraries and churches
 - Still, not all students had the means of transportation (parents working etc.)



Tech deserts today

- Continuous concern about keeping up with technology
- Making a space for technology while
 - (1) advocating for safe, clean, schools;
 - (2) managing students' needs, such as transportation
disability accommodations
healthcare
- Funding problems
- Concerns about test scores



Efforts to Resolve Tech Deserts

National level

- Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program: \$ 268+ million
- Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program: \$42.45+ billion
 - Verizon: “Bidding”
Logistical issues (bedrock etc.)



Virginia-State level

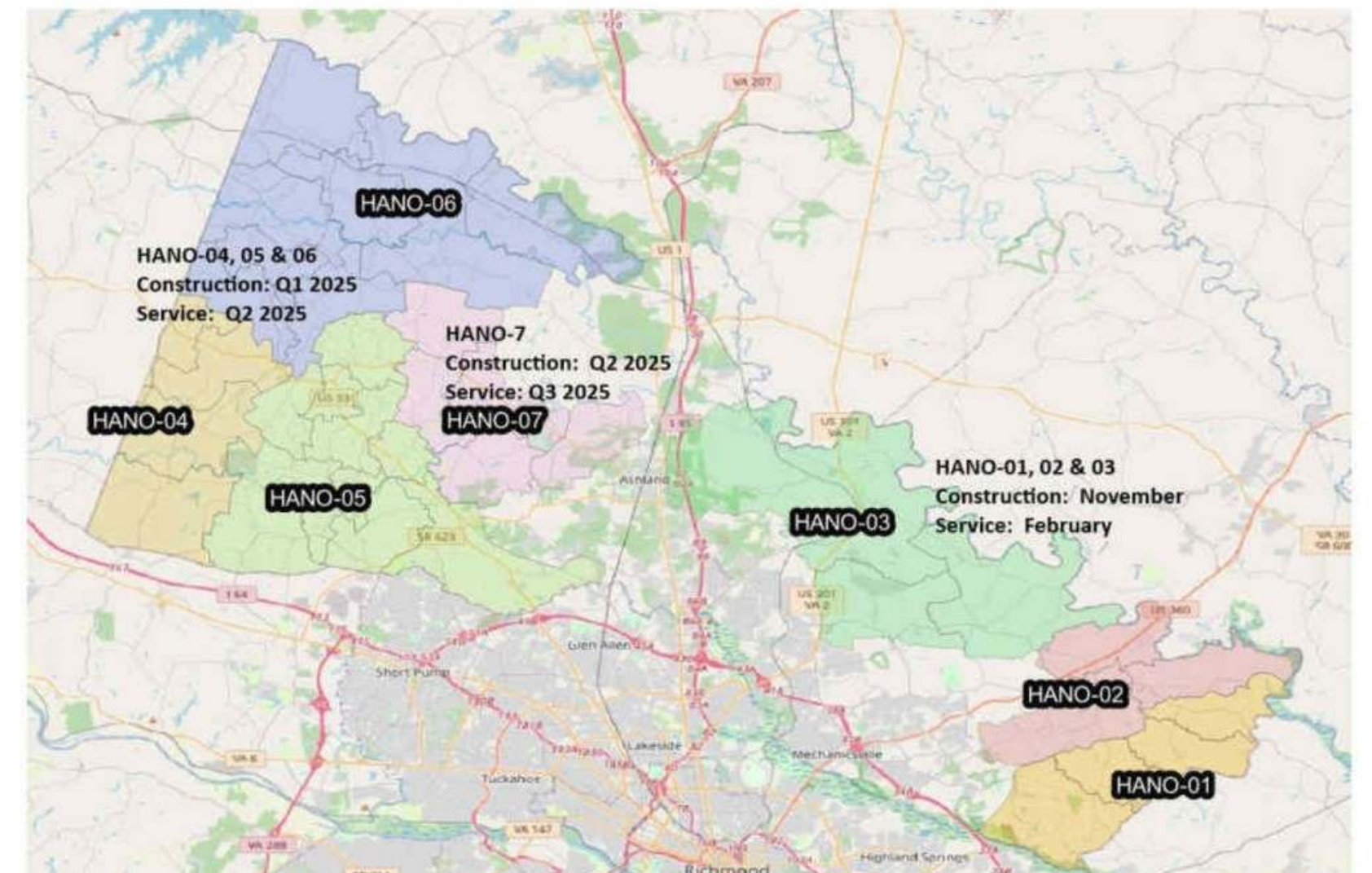
- Virginia Telecommunications Initiative (VATI)
 - Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development
- Del. Scott Wyatt: “legislators can’t force the power companies and ISPs to ‘play together’ at the moment. Many are making progress, while others are ‘at a standstill.’” (Dickens 2024)



Local/County level

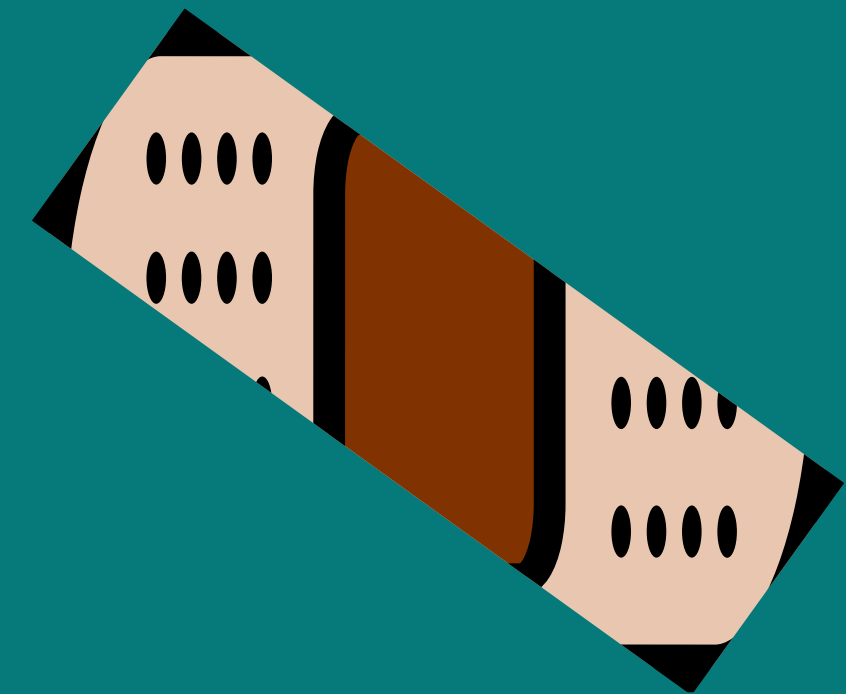
- Chromebooks
- “Hot spots”
 - Shaky connectivity
- New broadband districts
- Similar issues with ISPs at the state level

Projected Construction Start and Beginning Service Schedule



Mere Band-Aids

- Broadband has been available in the United States since the early 2000s, but we are just now seeing national, state, and local efforts.
 - Will we be 20 years behind on the next technological breakthrough/advancement?
- Additionally, simply providing access to broadband does not resolve the socioeconomic issues.
 - Just because someone *can* access broadband through Verizon or Comcast, doesn't mean they'll be able to pay for it in the long-term.
 - (grants help, but there is concern about what happens once these grants run out.)



Resolutions? Unlikely.

- Nationalization:
 - States' rights era:
Dobbs
San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez (1972)
- Federal DOE oversight:
 - New administration seems unwilling to support expansion of DOE
 - Ms. Hunter-Jordan: concerned that education system will struggle
- Expanding various programs (BEAD, E-RATE)
 - Not helpful in the long-term: grants run out and risk not being renewed.
 - Program specific things like E-RATE don't account for new, upcoming technology



Takeaways

Plessy's “separate but equal” doctrine persists in the form of technology deserts.

There is not a realistic solution to technology deserts under present-day systems.



Thank you!



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QUESTIONS

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