

Driving Regional Innovation through Vehicle Electrification (DRIVE)

The University of Alabama, Education Policy Center

1 SYNOPSIS

The DRIVE Coalition assembles nearly every heavy hitter and promising upstart in Alabama’s nascent vehicle electrification industry. Our partners come from the public and private sectors, from education and industry, from research and practice — all with the shared mission to revitalize Alabama’s rural economies by providing free and low-cost technical training and creating well-paying jobs.

Our nine component projects promise to reach 27 counties in the underserved Wider West Alabama region, including 23 persistent poverty counties and 12 coal-impacted communities. Closely aligned with local CEDS, our goal is to lay the groundwork over the next four years to impact 50,000 job aspirants within the decade through training, credentialing, and job creation, as well as to build an enduring pathway to economic success for future generations.

The right place

A revolution in vehicle electrification is stirring, and every indication places its epicenter in Wider West Alabama. The region’s five major automotive original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) are all highly motivated to recruit skilled workers. Our unemployed and underemployed population — a treasure trove of untapped human capital — is eager to upskill and unite around a shared mission. All that separates the two is a modest skills gap, which can be bridged by our educational and community partners.

Alabama’s potential has been recognized by our state’s leaders. In 2020, the state established the AL Innovation Commission (Innovate Alabama) and invested in the Tuscaloosa Innovation

District’s AL Mobility and Power (AMP) Center to provide regional leadership and coordination for vehicle electrification. To create public awareness, education, and excitement, Governor Ivey recently released the “Drive Electric Alabama” media campaign. To address the major barriers to electric vehicle (EV) adoption, The AL Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA) unveiled a state-wide EV infrastructure plan.

The push comes from industry as well as the state. Each of the state’s five automotive OEMs plan not only to ramp up production of EVs, but also to continue making significant investments in the state to build their production capacities. For example, Mercedes-Benz U.S. International (MBUSI), Alabama’s largest OEM, is currently undertaking a \$1.2 billion expansion to its equipment and facilities, in order to support EV production. Similarly, Hyundai is investing \$7.4 billion globally to build EVs, and a substantial portion of this investment is expected to go to its Montgomery, AL plant.

The right time

This state-level activity dovetails with the Biden Administration’s renewed national commitment to domestic manufacturing and climate leadership. Investment via the Build Back Better Agenda and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Deal aim to position the U.S. as the global leader of EV innovation, with an ambitious target of 50% market share by 2030.

All this activity couldn’t come at a better time. Global supply chain disruptions, brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, have strained the ability of automotive importers to meet demand. This has exposed the vulnerability inherent to our neglect of domestic manufacturing. Furthermore, the climate

and energy crises loom, with gas-powered vehicles and their emissions bearing considerable blame.

The right people

In order for EVs to supplant gas-powered vehicles, we need to manufacture way more of them. As OEMs and their suppliers prepare to ramp up production, they're having trouble finding enough qualified job candidates. The DRIVE Coalition was convened to determine the cause and devise a solution.

Our solution comprises nine component projects that make use of our every resource and partnership.

1. *TIDE3*: To catalyze the success of our Coalition, and to recruit and assist partners and participants, the Tuscaloosa Innovation District (TID) will construct R&D facilities at The University of Alabama (UA). This *Electric Expansion Effort* (TIDE3) will gather our most synergetic partners under three roofs.

The first will house a brain trust that comprises UA's Education Policy Center, the National Training Center for Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Technology, and the Alabama Learning & Work Research Institute. The second building will furnish spaces for promising EV companies to conduct R&D, recruited by the Tuscaloosa Economic Development Authority. The final building, constructed with match funding from UA, will be a forum for public-private partnerships, spearheaded by the Alabama Mobility & Power Center, the Alabama Transportation Institute, and the AL Department of Transportation Connected Operations Center.

The next four projects all tackle recruitment and training, with the goal of preparing people for high-skill jobs in EV manufacturing.

2. *DTP*: This project of West Alabama Works (WAW) endeavors to create new pathways to skilled manufacturing careers. The first of its two, *Driving Talent Pathways* (DTP), gives high schoolers and community college students the opportunity to earn seven stackable credentials and an Associate's Degree. The second gives job aspirants with low educational attainment a six-module crash course, culminating in an industry-recognized credential.

3. *SCRM*: UA's Initiative on Manufacturing Development and Education (IMaDE) will use augmented and virtual reality technology to make hands-on technical education accessible to those without classroom access. This program for *Smart & Connected Rural Manufacturing* (SCRM) will work with our technology partners and Wider West Alabama's network of community colleges to lend VR / AR equipment to students in need, then offer technical training courses and micro-credentials.

4. *DAO*: In order to extend the reach and impact of the aforementioned programs, West Alabama Works will expand its two interconnected online platforms for *Driving Access & Opportunity* (DAO). The first will enable WAW to offer direct support to program participants. The second will let companies post jobs to program graduates.

5. *Pathways*: Recognizing that it's easier to get ahead when you needn't first catch up, UA's Education Policy Center will provide resources and support to four proven K-12 programs that boost high school completion and promote college attendance.

Our mission will never be complete while systemic barriers limit access to our programs. The last three projects provide wraparound services to ensure equity.

6. *DRW*: Many people in rural communities are excluded from the workforce due to a lack of reliable transportation. The *Drive, Ride, Walk* (DRW) project of the Alabama Transportation Institute will work with industry and technology partners to pursue six different strategies for increasing personal, public, and active transportation in rural communities.

7. *CRU*: Without access to affordable childcare, rural parents are oft faced with an impossible choice: leave their children in unqualified hands, or stay trapped in poverty. Shelton State Community College will assemble a *Childcare Response Unit* (CRU) to address this urgent need, working with its network of community childcare providers and industry sponsors.

8. *VitAL Reach*: Poverty in Wider West Alabama has a high cost: depression, insomnia, and anxiety,

as well as drug and alcohol addiction. UA's School of Social Work will launch a behavioral health program to address the mental health issues that prevent people from getting and retaining employment.

9. *Governance*: To best encourage and engage further support across local and state governments, as well as private sector and community based organizations, it is critical to know and be able to show what works. To that end, our ninth component, led by the EPC and CBER, focuses on continued refinements across our coalition over time while demonstrating and capturing any gains made to further encourage sustainability and investment.

2 GEOGRAPHICAL REGION SERVED

Our Coalition has identified a service area comprising 27 counties in rural Alabama, which we've called "Wider West Alabama." These include all 25 counties of the Black Belt — a region defined by its legacy of agricultural slavery — and two additional counties, to round out the nine served by West AlabamaWorks.

Regional Challenges

Wider West Alabama accounts for 22,185.63 square miles (43.81%) of Alabama's 50,645.33 square-mile footprint. 17 counties are considered *sparsely populated*, or alternatively *extremely rural*, meaning they're home to fewer than 25 people per square mile — but through sheer vastness, the region still manages to encompass a fifth of Alabama's total population.

All of Alabama's 23 Persistent Poverty Counties fall within Wider West Alabama. 25 counties in the region are targeted by Alabama's statewide economic workforce development plans (out of 40 total). Six are Tribal Adjacent counties, and a full 12 are designated coal impacted communities (i.e. Coal Communities) — Alabama ranks 14th in total coal production and eighth in bituminous coal production in the U.S.

Wider West Alabama includes 49 of the state's 158 Opportunity Zones, which have a poverty rate

of at least 20% and a median family income of at most 80% of the statewide or area median income. In this region in particular, this means that a family of four will earn around \$34 thousand, versus the state median of \$52,000.

The region is characterized by high distress, low resilience, and a majority-minority demography. The high school graduation rate is 11 points lower than the national average, at just 81%. Unsurprisingly, college attainment is even lower, with only 24% and 16% of Wider West Alabama adults having earned Associate's and Bachelor's degrees, respectively. The national averages are more than double that, at 50% and 39%.

The employment rate of 95% fails to reflect the number of eligible adults who don't actively participate in the workforce, which our surveys show is startlingly high. Nor does it reflect the problem of underemployment, which is most common among low-skill, low-wage workers like those in those in the region.

Regional Assets

Awareness of, and the very real possibility of, being able to use an EV more reliably, is changing across the state and will change manufacturing and purchasing even further. Despite these challenges, the region is ripe with potential. It is home to six public four-year universities, including the state's two flagship universities, The University of Alabama and Auburn University. Additionally, it includes six community colleges with 11 satellite campuses, as well as six non-profit independent colleges and two technical colleges. Four of these are Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

On top of that is a sizeable network of workforce training facilities, including 20 training centers and 68 libraries.

To expand employment opportunities, you need employers. Wider West Alabama is home to two of the state's five OEMs — MBUSI in the west and Hyundai in the east — plus their networks of 40 suppliers. Together, they currently employ nearly 18,000 individuals, and new investments promise to create many more in the near future.

Counties List

Barbour County (01005), Bibb County (01007), Bullock County (01011), Butler County (01013), Choctaw County (01023), Clarke County (01025), Conecuh County (01035), Crenshaw County (01041), Dallas County (01047), Escambia County (01053), Fayette County (01057), Greene County (01063), Hale County (01065), Lamar County (01075), Lowndes County (01085), Macon County (01087), Marengo County (01091), Monroe County (01099), Montgomery County (01101), Perry County (01105), Pickens County (01107), Pike County (01109), Russell County (01113), Sumter County (01119), Tuscaloosa County (01125), Washington County (01129), Wilcox County (01131)

3 PRIVATE-SECTOR ENGAGEMENT

Rural, persistent poverty counties and coal impacted counties today, such as exist throughout Wider West Alabama and the Black Belt, tend to be largely rural with few large private sector employers. Yet, DRIVE is fortunate to have the clearly articulated support and investment of many of the largest private sector employers in the state. These investments will help move broadband coverage forward across the state, making outreach and education into rural areas in addition to remote working, possible in a way they have never been before. These private sector investments layer incredibly well with the state of Alabama’s investments in EV across the state, providing a new opportunity for increased private sector engagement in Wider West Alabama.

Since Phase I, our Coalition has received broad and unwavering support from the private sector, including all five of Alabama’s automotive OEMs, their suppliers, utilities companies, and workforce training providers.

These commitments have taken on different forms. Some of our partners have already made financial contributions. For example, MBUSI and Alabama Power have made in-kind contributions

Partner	Partner Type
Alabama Automotive Manufacturers Association	State workforce development partner
Alabama Power Company	Industry partner
Alabama Rural Electric Association of Cooperatives	State workforce development partner
Carbon	Industry partner
C-Spire	Industry partner
Economic Development Partnership of Alabama	State workforce development partner
Energy Institute of Alabama	Industry partner
Li-Cycle Corporation	Industry partner
Mercedes Benz U.S. International	Industry partner
Onin Group	Industry partner
Hyundai	Industry partner
Via Transportation	Industry partner

totaling over \$1 million to support the construction of the AMP Center.

Others have committed their resources if the grant is successful. For instance, as part of the *Drive, Ride, Walk* initiative, Via Transportation has committed to providing flexible transportation options to current and future employees in the region.

Others have committed to donate their state-of-the-art technology. To outfit new technology hubs as part of the *Smart & Connected Rural Manufacturing* initiative, Carbon will donate 3-D printers and software worth over \$500,000.

Others still have committed to work with our initiatives to train and hire participants.

This is just the beginning. If this grant is funded, we anticipate a snowball effect as more private sector entities latch onto our program's promise. Additionally, the DRIVE Coalition will work with our partners to identify and solicit new funding opportunities, including state and federal grants as well as private sources. And we will continue building our network by leveraging existing partnerships into new connections.

On the right column of this page is a selection of our letters of support. For the complete list see the attachment titled *Updated Letters of Support*.

4 SUSTAINABILITY

DRIVE, and its portfolio of programs, superstructures existing systems. By combining proven methods of workforce development in the region with innovative programming responsive to a changing economy and community needs, DRIVE scales existing structures rather than building new ones. The most innovative programs are unsustainable if they do not resonate with the rural communities they are designed to serve. Communal and industrial buy-in are thus cornerstones of DRIVE's sustainability strategy. In addition, DRIVE programs are deeply intertwined with state initiatives, which makes them eligible for funding opportunities yet to come.

For instance, DRIVE's target industry aligns perfectly with Alabama's in-demand occupation

and industry list. To meet its workforce development goals, as outlined in the state's "Strong Start, Strong Finish" and "Success Plus" initiatives, Alabama identified high-demand jobs across its seven workforce regions to more effectively braid funding streams. Further, the state is developing a credential registry and accompanying compendium of valuable credentials that will guide individuals into high opportunity career pathways. By aligning our efforts with these state initiatives, we ensure that DRIVE is an integral part of Alabama's workforce development funding strategies for the foreseeable future.

By component project

Our nine component projects each take a slightly different tack on the problem of sustainability. This mixed approach ensures we cover all our bases.

The *Tuscaloosa Innovation District Electric Expansion Effort* is investing in long-term relationships and playing the long game with cultivating talent and innovation.

Driving Talent Pathways expands access to training opportunities in rural communities, thereby building a robust workforce pipeline. With a skilled workforce, communities are more likely to attract business investments and become self-sustaining.

For example, *Smart & Connected Rural Manufacturing* makes its biggest investment in educational technologies, which will continue to be useful long after the current manufacturing methods have gone out of date. It flips the ratio of educational and industrial technology used in training, so upgrades to the latter only mean replacing a machine or two, not retrofitting an entire department.

Driving Access & Opportunity enables us to track the individuals utilizing our other programs, monitor their outcomes, and ensure that our offerings meet their needs. This insight will help us keep our programs up to date, as we analyze the evolving needs of employees and employers.

Pathways to College and Careers is speaking to the next generation directly, so although we won't see these students enter the workforce for several

years, we're already shoring up the next wave after this initial one.

Drive, Ride, Walk creates access to our training sites and participants' future places of work, and the *Childcare Response Unit* ensures that everyone who wants to enter the workforce can do so without being at home. *VitAL Reach* addresses behavioral health challenges long-term, creating a healthier workforce that is more reliable and resilient to changes. These three projects protect our investment, guarding our progress against backsliding via absenteeism and workforce dropout.

5 PLAN FOR ENGAGING SPECIFIC ORGANIZATIONS

Each of our component projects are tailored to the communities they are serving and our Coalition understands that an initiative can only be successful if it is supported by the communities it is designed to impact. In Wider West Alabama community engagement must include local CEDS, public school leaders, church leaders, county commissioners, as well as regional workforce councils.

CEDS

Seven CEDS cover the 27 counties in Wider West Alabama. Three of the regional commissions—Alabama-Tombigbee (ATRC), West Alabama (WARC), and South Central (SCRC)—are core partners of the Coalition and will help implement some of our programs. For example, ARTC will be hosting the Black Belt Leadership Academy, which will include leaders from all 27 counties in a year-long continuing education experience and building development capacity in the region. In addition, their economic plans will continue to inform DRIVE programs. The CEDS share aligned interests with DRIVE in seeking to build workforce training and support as well as attracting industry to these regions. As such, CEDS regional commissions are key partners for DRIVE and building both comprehensive regional improvements and EV-specific manufacturing capacity.

Public school leaders

There are 27 county and 13 city school districts in the 27 targeted counties. With the strong endorsement of State Superintendent of Schools Eric Mackey, DRIVE will convene the 40 Black Belt school superintendents — 36 of whom wrote support letters for this grant —quarterly to inform them of our progress. We will work through the School Superintendents of Alabama and the University of Alabama Superintendents Academy for additional improvement opportunities but also to link to the rebuilt statewide careers and apprenticeship platforms, recrafted by the EPC in partnership with the Articulation & General Studies Commission and the Alabama Office of Apprenticeships. School linkages will also be a key part of credentialing and EV career development plans across multiple coalition components.

Church leaders & county commissioners

Our Coalition will work with our CEDS partners to develop partnerships with local church leaders and county commissioners. The President of the Alabama Association of County Officials is already committed to our initiative. In addition, we will partner with the Alabama League of Municipalities. Similarly, Black Belt based CEDS have solid relationships with key local Black and white church leaders. Our Coalition will leverage those relationships to further solidify our footprint in the region.

Regional Workforce Councils

West Alabama Works, one of our key members, is one of the seven Workforce Investment Councils. We will leverage its existing networks to further the regional partnerships. In addition, the Coalition will continue their close work with the Alabama Department of Community and Economic Affairs, the Alabama Industrial Development Training program, and the Alabama Department of Commerce to strengthen ties with the workforce community in Alabama. Additionally, the EPC regularly presents to the Governor's Education and Workforce Transformation Board, which is tied directly to the

6 PLAN ON ENGAGING EQUITABLY

Alabama's Black Belt has been left behind over time, stuck in a riptide that sees its residents falling further and further behind in workforce participation, educational attainment, income, healthcare coverage and more, as documented in the EPC's 2021 and 2022 series of briefs on the Black Belt. COVID has hit these persistent poverty counties even harder than the rest of the state of Alabama. Expanding access to skilled manufacturing jobs, the training, education, and credentialing to earn those jobs, as well as childcare, transportation, and behavioral health will help alleviate the enduring hardship felt by many in Wider West Alabama and foster economic growth. Our Coalition stands apart in that each of our nine component projects was designed with two questions in mind: how can we reach as many underserved individuals as possible? and, how can we ensure that the positive impacts of our initiatives are felt across all of Wider West Alabama?

The answers to both of these are: comprehensive, layered programs that support and build upon each other, targeted distributions of funds to achieve those components' goals, and program scalability with endemic and embedded programs that reside in and focus on the growth of the region.

Distribution of funds

To ensure that the benefits of the cluster are equitably shared across all 27 counties in Wider West Alabama, our programs funnel funds into the communities. This is done in two ways: directly, through the allocation of money for the implementation of programs, and indirectly, through spinoff investments that result from these direct investments.

For example, Driving Talent Pathways is providing five community colleges with funds to expand the industry recognized, soft skill credentialing program Ready-to-Work. It specifically targets individuals with low educational attainment who seek entry-employment. Due to a lack of resources, many community colleges in the region

were forced to reduce the number of courses offered. In addition, Driving Talent Pathways is investing in 22 school systems in Wider West Alabama, providing the needed funds to hire additional Career and Technical Education (CTE) teachers for advanced manufacturing programs.

Similarly, Smart & Connected Rural Manufacturing is equipping training hubs with state-of-the-art technology to train and educate rural students in advanced manufacturing. The regional universities and community colleges in the rural parts of Wider West Alabama often cannot afford to make these kinds of investments; this is limiting the type of courses they can offer and their responsiveness to the needs of evolving industries. As a result, students who seek to study specialized subjects often have no choice but to leave their communities and pursue their educational careers at other institutions; or not pursue them at all.

These are two examples of the direct investments our Coalition is making to reach our region's underserved populations and communities. The strength of our approach also comes from the spinoff investments that will result from the funding of our programs. For example, the Tuscaloosa Innovation District Electrification Expansion Effort (TIDE3) and the private-public partnerships that are being forged on its back, is connecting communities to industry helping them recruit employers to their area. In addition, the TIDE3 research and training efforts will inform local workforce training initiatives to ready local workers for new employment opportunities.

Program scalability

Transformative change does not happen overnight. Many of the problems that communities in Wider West Alabama are dealing with are long-standing, with deep roots. Thus, it would be utopian to assume that any initiative can make an impact all at once. Therefore, each of our component projects is designed to be scalable both in size and reach.

7 EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The intent for the our Coalition is to be a national demonstration program for how to improve workforce development in rural, persistent poverty counties. In Wider West Alabama this requires us to work across sectors.

Our nine component projects address training and credentialing needs, education pathway options, company recruitment and outreach, research and development, as well as childcare, transportation, and behavioral health. With each doing their part to work toward an electric vehicle future.

Accordingly, the collective DRIVE Coalition seeks to:

- increase workforce participation in the Black Belt from 37%, which is 20 points below the state average, to over 40%. This would be an 8% change over the period of this grant.
- ratchet up recruitment of EV related companies, including infrastructure, to the area. We expect investments in 40 economic developers for region, recruitment of 20 AMP partner companies, and 5 companies recruited to region beyond the TIDE3 component.
- train and newly credential over 15,000 individuals in Wider West Alabama in four years. Individuals will be prepared for middle and high skilled careers as well as post-secondary education.
- introduce over 15,000 high school and middle school students to careers in the automotive industry, specifically the EV field.
- lower high school drop out rate by 40%, lower the percentage of high school graduate not continuing onto college by also 40%, increase college going rates by 25%, and increase high school seniors completing the Federal Application for Student Financial Aid to 95% — by giving every 8th and 11th grader in the Wider West Alabama (currently 12,749) and Individual College and Career Success Plan.
- make available transportation options to a minimum of 5,000 individuals yearly by

introducing employer-based mobility and scaling public transit-based mobility options.

In addition, our programs will improve access to childcare for individuals living in rural counties by equipping communities with the resources needed to build private-public partnerships and establish new or update existing childcare facilities.

8 WORK CONDUCTED IN PHASE 1

Since the submission of the Phase 1 proposal, we, as a coalition, continued to focus our efforts on the engagement of community, industry, and state partners to build out our initiatives. The broad support we have received from these entities shows that our commitment to improving social and economic prosperity in Wider West Alabama is both trusted and reciprocated by key stakeholders. It also shows that the automotive industry's transition to electrification requires all hands on deck.

To this application are attached support letters from MBUSI and its suppliers, from the Alabama Automotive Manufacturers Association, seven regional commissions (CEDs), statewide and regional workforce councils, state government leaders including Governor Key Ivey, Finance Director Bill Poole, Secretary of Commerce Greg Canfield, AIDT Director Ed Castille, Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs Director Kenneth Boswell; statewide education leaders including Alabama State Superintendent of Education Eric Mackey, Alabama Commission on Higher Education Executive Director Jim Purcell; 7 of 11 targeted postsecondary colleges and universities, including 4 HBCUs; 36 of 40 county and city schools superintendents from Wider West Alabama; county and local elected officials; and regional church leaders.

This broad support is only one of the outcomes of the work conducted by our coalition in the last four months.

Coalition building

- Established MOU for coalition member
- Developed brand strategy, media kit, and internal/teams site
- Created steering committee of local, state and national experts
- Hosted component projects consultations as well as group/board meetings
- Conducted preliminary analysis of WWA region
- Developed joint economic development

strategy and evaluation plan (including data management and reporting procedures as well as overall governance structure)

- Compiled/published WWA resource directory
- Hired RECO and Administrative Assistant
- Add ninth component to specifically address the need for coalition governance.

Capital Access

- Secured match funding across all component projects
- Negotiated contract and service agreements with industry partners
- Construction — Toured site locations and met with site contractors

Private sector engagement

- Engaged industry partners — MBUSI, Hyundai, suppliers
- Met with former and current CEOs, HR managers, etc.
- Conducted OEM & supplier survey

Public sector engagement

- Met with all 4 economic development district (EDD/CEDs) partners to coordinate and align efforts
- Secured partnerships with Alabama Workforce Regions 5 and 7
- Met with state and regional planning agencies such as ALSDE, ADOL, ADOC, GOEWT, ARC, ADECA to integrate statewide plans
- Met with colleges and universities to coordinate collaborative training/research partnerships
- Facilitated listening sessions with K-12 school superintendents and church leaders across the Black Belt
- Released Black Belt Issue Brief Series highlighting the needs and circumstance of counties across the Wider West Alabama
- Participated in West Alabama Works manufacturing cluster meetings and NEXT Level Series

8 DETAILED LIST OF CHANGES

A few changes were made between the Phase 1 and Phase 2 application. Specifically, our Coalition agreed to take a different approach to addressing transportation as a barrier to employment and training opportunities. In addition, our Coalition secured additional investments from private and public partners.

Transportation Project Updates

Phase 1 of the DRIVE proposal initially focused on providing access to credit so that potential participants (i.e., employees and trainees) could have increased access to private vehicle loans. During preparations of the Phase 2 proposal, a more holistic approach was taken that is intended to provide a more inclusive approach to transportation in the region that will enhance community resiliency and equitable access to new professional opportunities across the project area. Thus, the program changed from a revolving loan program to a suite of transportation options (increased responsiveness to community needs and technology transformation).

With this change in approach, the Coalition agreed to change the lead of the project from West Alabama Works to the Alabama Transportation Institute.

Additional Investments

Each component project has attracted investments and commitments from private and public entities (see component projects match documentation). For example, The University of Alabama Division of Finance and Operations provided \$5 million in scholarship awards for rural students in Wider West Alabama and the Black Belt to connect them with higher education programs.

The University of Alabama Office of Research & Economic Development provided \$7.5 million to support the programmatic component parts of the *Tuscaloosa Innovation District Electrification Expansion Efforts* to further research and development

in electrification, facilitate training programs, as well as to support private-public partnership engagement.

The Alabama Power Company supports the DRIVE initiatives through the expansion of broadband access in Wider West Alabama. Career and training opportunities are directly related to internet access. To this end, Alabama Power is aligning their own investment priorities with the target service area of DRIVE.