Vermont Community Broadband

Presented to the Vermont League of Cities and Towns

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## ACT 71 – Role of Vermont Community Broadband Board

### “Universal Service” - Connect every underserved Vermonter to 100 Mbps symmetrical broadband.

- Provide resources to communications union districts in the form of administrative and technical support;
- Provide grants for the preconstruction and construction costs of broadband projects for eligible providers;
- Facilitate partnerships between communications union districts and their potential partners;
- Address workforce and material shortages

### Funding
- $150 Million in State Fiscal Recovery ARPA funds for 2021; $100 Million in 2022. Possible additional funds from the Infrastructure Bill
- Identify State, federal, nonprofit, and private broadband funding opportunities
Vermont Community Broadband Board

Board appointed; August 9 Kick-off

- Laura Sibilia
- Dan Nelson
- Holly Groschner
- Brian Otley
- Patty Richards (Chair)

Executive Director and Rural Broadband Technical Assistant

Up to Five additional positions to be hired

Meeting Every Other Monday from 12-4

Meeting Notices, Minutes and Recordings

https://publicservice.vermont.gov/vcbb
What we have done so far

Stakeholder Engagement
- Communications Union Districts (CUDs)
- Towns and Regional Planning Commissions
- Telecom Providers

Identified Priorities
- Assessing the “maturity” of each CUDs
- Funding for Preconstruction (Engineering, Make-Ready, Capacity)
- Design Standards
- Barriers to Construction in 2022 – Material and Labor Shortages
- Policy Formulation

Funding
- Issuing grants for preconstruction
- Preparing to issue grants for construction in December 2021
- Creative solutions to ensure Construction in 2022
Draft time-line (general)

CUD fiber design and Construction

- Design Vendor Engaged by CUD
- Funds Available
- VCBB Issues Preconstruction RFP
- Designs Complete Construction partner selected by CUD
- VCBB issues construction RFP
- Construction Begins

The Business plan drives the annual construction plan which is finalized through the Detailed Design

Vendor Selection and approval

Material lead-time
Stage materials
Develop Construction Plans

10/21 12/21 02/22 04/22 06/22 08/22 10/22 12/22 02/23
As of 2019, 68,899 E911 locations in Vermont were underserved.

Underserved service is available at less than 25/3 Mbps. (dial-up or DSL).

Since 2019
- RDOF addresses* 17,083 “with a plan”
- 2020 Connectivity Initiative – 2,408 Wired Addresses
- 2020 Line Extension Program 441 Wired Addresses

Updated Data – Late October 2021
Overview: Communications Union Districts

Summer 2021
• 9 Districts
• 197 Member Towns
• 398 Volunteer Board Reps & Alternates
• More than half the state’s population
• 90% of premise statewide without access to 100/100 Mbps broadband
Basic Model

• Grant Funding and Donations Provide Initial Funding
• CUDs build and owns infrastructure. Operator provides the service
• CUDs access the Revenue Bond Market to complete the build-out of their district
• “Rinse and Repeat”- Revenue bonds pay for additional build-out

More Bonding = Higher Consumer Prices
More Grants = More Affordable Broadband Access
Local Funding is a Piece of the Puzzle
How to help – CUD Members

- Connect with your Communications Union District or if there is none the Regional Planning Commission
  - Prevents “Cherry Picking” – Demand Universal Service
  - Promotes Public Infrastructure that can be leveraged
  - Ensures Community Input
  - Focus on “Future Proof” Technologies
How it could work

Leverage the local funds to fund a full build out to your community

• Provide the Communications Union District with a letter committing funds for a build-out of addresses in your community.
• Letters are filed with the Construction Grant Program that opens in December 2021.
• Funds are made available to the CUD contingent on being awarded a grant.
How it could work

Provide Upfront Down Payment

- Provide the CUD upfront (now) with 25% of the amount to assist with preconstruction and to address material shortages if they can provide a timeline for providing service.
- Allows for more flexibility outside of the VCBB Grant Process
- Exchange for reduced cost municipal service
How it could work

**Cover the cost of the Drops to Homes and Business**

- CUD provides estimate costs of all drops (aerial and underground) to homes and businesses in the community.
- Provide the Communications Union District with a letter committing funds for all Road to Home/Business Connections in the community.
- Letters are filed with the Construction Grant Program that opens in December 2022.
- Funds are made available to when construction begins in the community.
How it could work

**Cover the cost of fiber to all “anchor institutions”**

- By connecting schools, municipal buildings, shelters, health care etc. a web of fiber is created that the CUD could build off throughout the community starting with those institutions and the underserved.
- Provide the Communications Union District with a letter committing funds for all Road to Home/Business Connections in the community.
- Letters filed with the Construction Grant Program that opens in December 2022.
How to help – Non CUD Towns

• If the town borders a CUD, reach out [https://publicservice.vermont.gov/content/vermont-communications-union-districts](https://publicservice.vermont.gov/content/vermont-communications-union-districts)
• Issue an RFP for 100/100 service to all underserved addresses (Universal Service) in the town – telephone providers & ISPs
• Require a private match and/or a commitment to privately build out or upgrade addresses served at 25/3 (not ARPA eligible) to 100/100
• Public ownership – Create an asset
• Require a public process to ensure accountability and service quality
• “Build Once” - Focus on “Future Proof” Technologies
• Contact the VCBB – We can help
Questions? Ideas? Next Steps?

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