

VCUDA

The Vermont Communications Union Districts Association serves to unite the interests of Vermont's growing municipal internet networks, devising ways to share resources and voicing CUD consensus on critical policy issues.

Before the Vermont Senate Finance Committee
January 10, 2023 3PM

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A National Perspective on Vermont Leadership:

- Vermont's pre-pandemic leadership through Act 79 and Act 71 has set it ahead of many states in having solid plans to bring world class universal availability to unserved and underserved residents.
- Vermont's Community-Based Broadband program is a national leader in converting federal funding opportunities into universal service with advanced, world class, broadband on previously unserved doorsteps.
- There is accountability & momentum building across Vermont in realizing Universal service plans through publicly owned Communications Union Districts.

Vermont Communications Union Districts

Developed under the direction of hundreds of community volunteers.



**NORTHWEST
FIBERWORX**



Lamoille FiberNet
Communications Union District



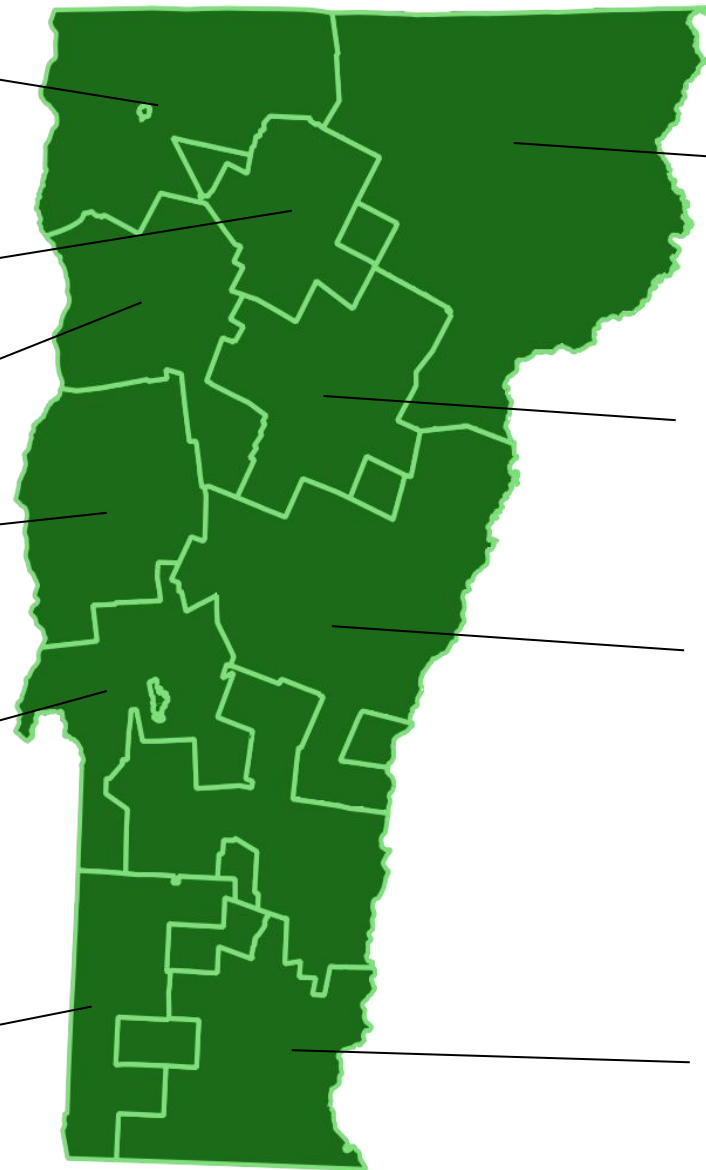
MAPLE
BROADBAND



OtterCreek
communications
union district

SoVT CUD

Chittenden
County CUD



CVFIBER



DVFiber

empowering our connection to the future





- **Hired** talented and experienced executive director: Jennille Smith
- **Make Ready:** achieved its first utility make ready licenses and is in discussions with contractors for construction of its network to start
- **Materials:** ordered and received most of its 400 miles of construction materials and obtained warehousing for storage of the materials
- **Volunteer Resident Professionals:** CVFiber continues to operate through a committed staff of volunteer professionals
- **Construction Kick-Off** - December 21, 2022 in Calais



NEK BROADBAND



Talented Executive Director: Christa Shute

New Staffing: Full-time bookkeeper/grant manager, community relations manager, part time treasurer, GIS Specialist. Posting for: CFO, Executive Assistant, Installation Technicians.

Grants: \$16 million plus \$5 million = \$21 million in construction grants. Applied for additional \$23.3 million federal construction grant. Loan approval from VEDA for \$5 million loan.

Construction and Customers: added 13 additional miles for a total of 34 miles with service to 432 premises. Long-term contract with Eustis Cable with 90% of workers to be residents of NEK.

Warehousing: Saint Johnsbury & Brighton Warehouses. Received 300 miles of parts, 800 miles of fiber.

Make Ready: Applications for 512 miles and over 11,000 poles (licenses received for 38 miles).

Easements and Licenses: Out of 23 equipment cabinet locations, several are secured, many are identified and confirmed with easements in process. Variety of permits including underground, aerial interstate crossings.





MAPLE BROADBAND



- **Hiring:** Hired experienced Executive Director, Ellie de Villiers, who has a decade of experience in telecommunications operations and strategy, with a focus on affordable access in emerging markets.
- **Funding:** Received \$8.7M grant for construction in portions of Cornwall, Leicester, Middlebury, Orwell, Salisbury, Shoreham, and Whiting.
- **Contracting:** Awarded initial contract to Syracuse Utilities through competitive bid.
- **Construction:** 25.7 miles of fiber construction (303 locations) completed
- **Marketing:** Direct mail postcards; 34/303 (~11%) of eligible passings already interested based solely on construction vehicle signage
- **Permitting:** Make-ready surveys for next construction phase nearing completion
- **Community Involvement:** Estimated 2,600 volunteer hours by CUD residents in past 6 months.
- First customers *expected to go live on Wednesday, January 11, 2023.*





NORTHWEST FIBERWORX

- **Planning:** Recently refocused on new network tenants and re-analyzed finance modeling (Internet Service Providers).
- **Rates:** Develop rates and required provisions for network licensing.
- **Request for Information:** Reviewing RFI results for network licensing.
- **Pole Surveys and Build Sequencing:** Completed 250 miles of aerial LIDAR surveys in Enosburgh and Swanton. Completed build sequencing and technical standards with NRTC.
- **Detailed Design:** Starting on Zone 1 of detailed design.
- **Fiber Delivery:** received mid-December.



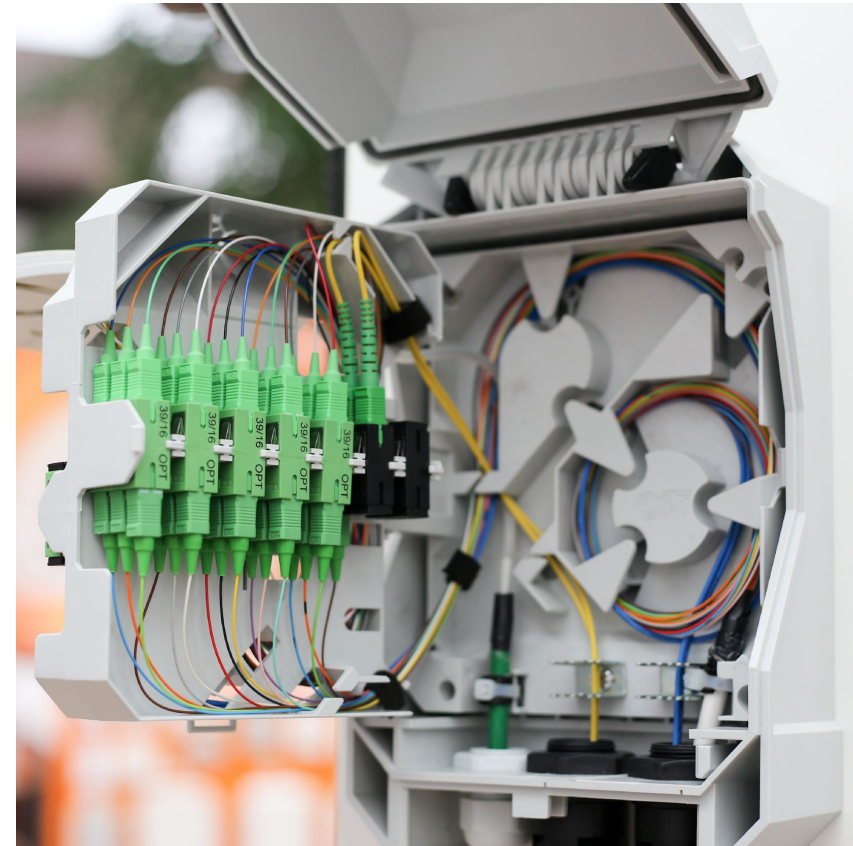
Southern Vermont CUD



- **Signed:** Master Services Agreement in place with Consolidated Communications, Inc to begin construction of a fiber network in the CUD's territory.
- **Phase 1:** Currently underway, is financed by CCI as part of their Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) obligations and covers most of the Southshire, including Bennington, Woodford, Glastenbury, and part of Pownal and Shaftsbury. Phase 1 was completed during 2022.
- **SoVT CUD Grant:** Application to the Construction Grant Program approved for \$9,009,085 in partnership with Consolidated Communications Inc (CCI).
- **Phase 2A:** Financed by VCBB Construction Grant. Currently in engineering and planning, set to begin deployment in early 2023, will cover approximately 2,000 unserved and underserved addresses in the CUD's territory.
 - Most of SoVT CUD's territory will be covered at the conclusion of this phase.
- Identified and confirmed the "hardest 100" addresses - now narrowed down to the "hardest 17" - and developing a plan to serve those locations.
- **Partnerships:** The CUD has greatly benefited from collaboration with the Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC). The administrative assistance and expertise in navigating the public funding arena provided by Community and Economic Development Specialist Jonathan Cooper and Regional Planner Callie Fishburn has been invaluable.



- **Hiring:** An experienced leader, Gabrielle Ciuffreda, as Executive Director. Plan to add additional administrative support in the coming months.
- **Executive Committee:** To support the pace and volume of work, empowered an Executive Committee to act on behalf of the Governing Board for quicker decision making.
- **2nd grant,** for \$21.9 million, awarded on July 11, 2022. This grant, which was signed by DVFiber on August 12, 2022, will fund the construction of 513 miles of fiber optic cable capable of connecting up to two-thirds of the more than 7,700 unserved and underserved addresses in our district.
- **Construction Continues:** Construction of the southern backbone ring will continue unabated into 2023. A special taskforce is working to develop DVFiber's capacity to subsidize eligible customers who cannot afford the monthly charges for our service.
- **First Customers are Live:** An initial group of customers came online in late December, a milestone for Readsboro!





- **Hiring:** Hired experienced executive director, Val Davis. Also: grant coordinator and project construction engineer.
- **Pre-Construction:** Received first Pre-Construction grant from the VCBB for \$1,191,885. Completed initial high-level design, financial model and business plan.
- **Materials:** Over 135 miles of fiber on site.
- **Design/Build Award:** Selected NRTC as Design/Build Project Management partner. NRTC will now be working on the low-level design.
- **RFP for Operations:** RFP for ISP and Operations and Maintenance being reviewed.
- **Moving Towards Construction:** Grant application for construction in the works.





- **Already providing Service:** Original 23 towns are either complete, being lit, or under construction. Have constructed 1700 miles of network serving **over 7500** customers.
- **Proven:** ECFiber has focused on unserved and underserved for more than a decade.
- **Financing:** Have borrowed 63.5 million in municipal revenue bonds and received \$1 million of in-kind support in the form of the VTA's Orange County Fiber Connector, and has currently drawn down about \$350K of \$2.8M in pre-construction grants.
- **New Service Areas:** In the Town of Hartford, the unserved/underserved areas of West Hartford are done and the cabled areas in White River Jct, Wilder, Quechee and Hartford Village are under construction.
- **New Towns Being Added:** Supported in part by a grant from the broadband fund, design of 8 new towns and polished border areas is either finished or will be shortly.
- **Expansion to New Towns:** In newly admitted towns of Fairlee, West Fairlee, and Bradford (and hub construction in all new towns) construction is underway.



High Level view of program Risks & Mitigation:

Risk:

FCC Mapping Program, finalizing the IJA
BEAD Program's benefits for Vermont and
Delays

Pace and Cost of utility pole "Make Ready"

Funding to continue rapid progress that is
underway

Mitigation:

Continue leveraging community
knowledge and data from CUDs
and the State to correct
inaccuracies and improve data.

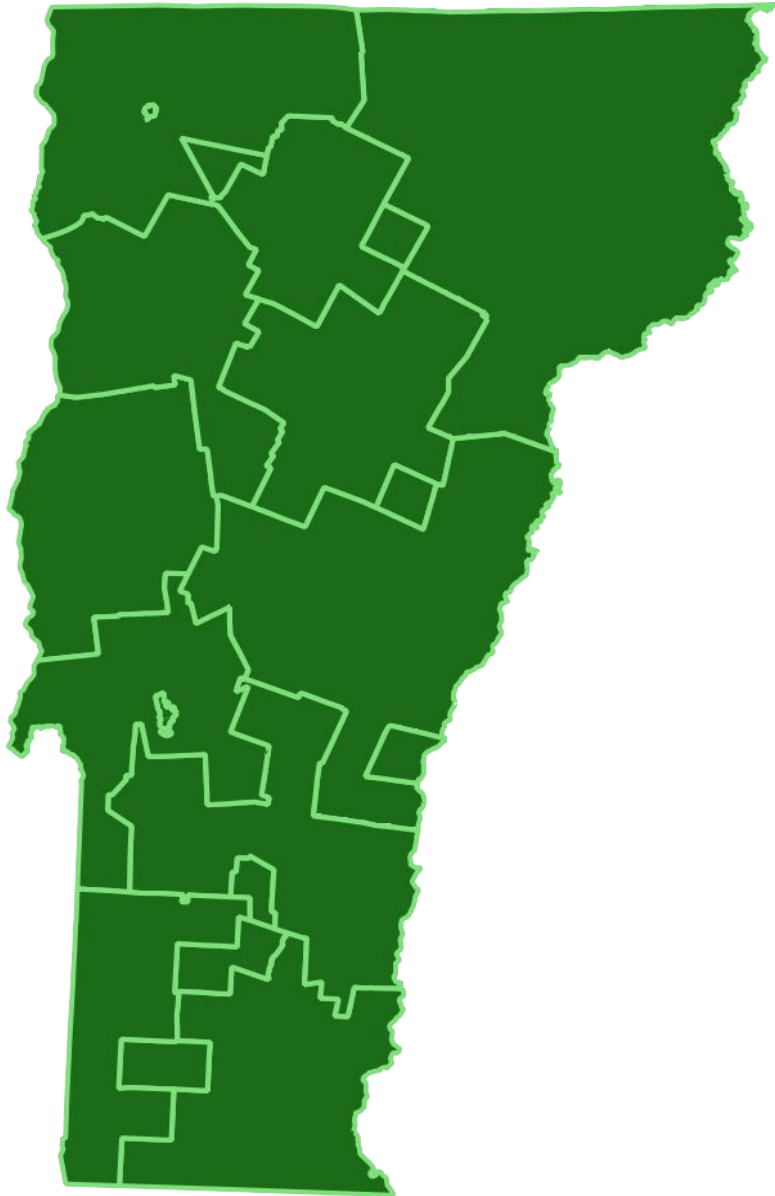
Increase Collaboration and
Communications between CUDs,
VCBB, and Pole Owners

Consider approaches to avoid
buildout stalls as federal funding
timeline clarifies.

Celebrate progress and people of the CUDs

Led by experts and hundreds of community volunteers, Vermont and its Communications Union Districts are on the move, delivering world class broadband where it has never been available before.





VCUDA

Thank you!

Vermont Senate Finance Committee
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