



**13 February 2024**

**TO:** Rep. Diane Lanpher + Sen. Jane Kitchel and Members of the House/ Senate Appropriations Committees

**FROM:** Lauren-Glenn Davitian, Public Policy Director, CCTV Center for Media + Democracy, [davitian@cctv.org](mailto:davitian@cctv.org)

**RE:** Vermont Access Network (VAN) FY25 One Time Request: \$1M

My name is Lauren-Glenn Davitian and I am the Public Policy Director for CCTV Center for Media & Democracy ([www.cctv.org](http://www.cctv.org)) based in Burlington Vermont. I represent [Vermont Access Network](#) (VAN) – 24 fellow community media centers that provide public, educational and government (PEG) access services to [all corners of Vermont](#) via 80+ cable tv channels and multiple online outlets.

I am appearing before you today to request your support to include VAN's \$1 million one-time bridge request in the FY25 Budget.

**Vermont's community media centers connect Vermonters** to the workings of local government (election coverage, live interactive public meetings, Legislative Coverage), to each other (major community events, local arts and culture programming) and to the world beyond (lectures, presentations, voices from outside of Vermont). We operate public, educational and government (PEG) access channels and services across the state.

**Vermont's 24 community media centers:**

- Operate 80 PEG channels, employ nearly 100 people and serve 170 communities across Vermont;

- Produce more than 18,000 hours of staff and volunteer generated TV and radio each year (including live open government public meetings, election forums and results, education access, community events, sports, cultural exchange, media education and the programs on topics from race to religion);
- Maintain extensive video archives that play an important role in the preservation of local identity; and,
- Provide unique non-commercial and community controlled resources, unlike commercial TV channels or today's social media platforms (e.g., YouTube, Facebook, TikTok).
- Demonstrate strong and enthusiastic support from community institutions across Vermont (please see *Vermont Organizational Support* attached).

**Vermont's AMOs were recognized by the Legislature as an "essential service"** during the COVID pandemic because of the role we play in getting public meetings online and distributing emergency information. The Legislature committed COVID Relief funds to continuity of operations during the pandemic, and again, appropriated general funds in BAA22 (\$300K), FY23 (\$600K) and FY24 (\$1M) as we work to secure an alternative, long term public funding source.

**With deep appreciation for past support, VAN requests FY25 General Fund support of \$1 million.** These funds will help close the gap between declining cable revenue, increased expenses and expanded services to Vermonters who are not served by traditional cable territories.

**The demand for community media services is growing** at the same time many cable TV subscribers (our primary revenue source) are replacing cable with internet subscriptions. Internet does not currently have the corollary public benefit requirements of community media services.

**While community media centers, such as CCTV are diversifying revenue** (for example through projects such as Vermont Language Justice Project), we must contend with the accelerating decline of cable TV revenue combined with steady increases in labor costs and other expenses.

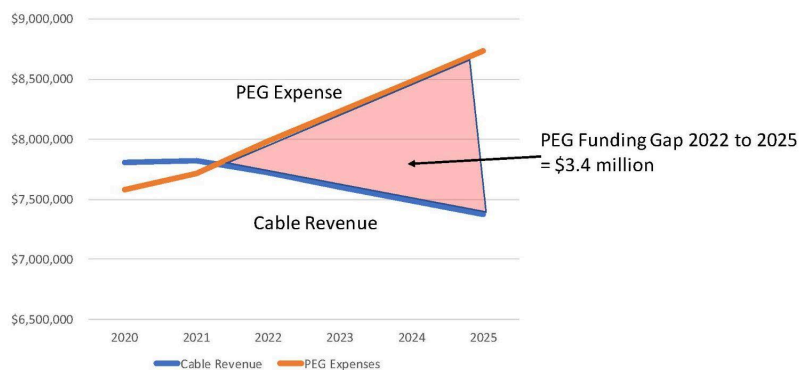
**The trend is real.**<sup>1</sup> Here is a snapshot of cable revenue in Comcast’s Burlington/ Green Mountain service territory. There has been an *18% decline* in cable revenue in this Comcast region since 2016.

Comcast Cable Revenue 12/31 - Green Mountain Service Territory - Burlington etc.				
2021	\$24,100,518.67			
2022	\$23,480,106.68	-3%		
2023	\$22,407,323.07	-5%		

CCTV’s Town Meeting TV is also funded by Burlington Telecom, which has experienced a 2% decline between 2022-23 and a *28% decline since 2016*.

Here are VAN’s statewide PEG projections through 2025. Please note that expenses increased at least 6% in this past fiscal year:

### Vermont PEG Financial Projections FY 2021 to 2025



- Notes:
- Access Management Centers (AMOs) reporting = 24
  - Cable Revenue declines as forecasted by AMO or -2% per year
  - PEG costs increase as forecasted or 3% per year
  - PEG funding gap = Cable revenue minus PEG expenses

With your support this year, Vermont Access Network can bridge the gap and continue to deliver essential local communications services to Vermonters.

Thank you for your consideration of Vermont Access Network’s one time bridge funding request for \$1 million in the FY25 General Fund budget.

<sup>1</sup> “With Cord-Cutting, Cable TV Industry Is Facing Financial Challenges”, Brad Adgate, 10 October 2023. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/bradadgate/2023/10/10/with-cord-cutting-cable-tv-industry-is-facing-financial-challenges/?sh=357e2d09756c>



Dear Policy Makers,

We the undersigned write to express our support for Vermont Access Network's two requests to the Vermont Legislature:

1. Appropriate \$1 million in one-time funding to the Vermont Access Network in FY2025.
2. Enact the Community Media Public Benefit Fund bill to assure long term funding.

For decades, public, educational, and government (PEG) channels have provided essential community services to Vermonters in all corners of the state. These community media centers (also known as AMOs) have been funded principally by state sanctioned surcharges on cable TV subscriptions, passed on to the AMOs by cable providers.

This primary source of funding for community media services is now steadily declining due to consumer preference shifts away from cable delivery, toward Internet-based information and entertainment services. To continue providing adequate support to Vermont's AMOs which will ensure that PEG services are broadly available everywhere in the state, we urge the Vermont Legislature to support both requests for one-time FY25 funding and the Community Media Public Benefit Fund bill which will create a stable and permanent revenue source.

Thank you for your consideration.

**Addison County Chamber of Commerce**  
Ferrisburgh

**All Brains Belong VT**  
Montpelier

**Arts So Wonderful**  
South Burlington

**Bellows Free Academy Comet Hockey**  
St. Albans

**Bellows Free Academy Track & XC**  
St. Albans

**Bennington County Solid Waste Alliance**  
Bennington

**Bennington Free Library**  
Bennington

**Bennington Museum**  
Bennington

**Black River Action Team**  
Springfield

**Black River Good Neighbor Services**  
Ludlow

**BROC Community Action**  
Rutland

**Burr and Burton Academy**  
Manchester

**Caledonia Central SU**  
Danville

**Catamount Film & Arts Co.**  
St. Johnsbury

**Central Vermont Habitat for Humanity, Inc.**  
Montpelier

**Chaffee Art Center**  
Rutland

**Chamber & Economic Development of the Rutland Region**  
Rutland

**Chittenden Accountable Community for Health**  
South Burlington

**City of Essex Junction**  
Essex Junction

**City of St Albans**  
St. Albans

**Cohn Public Relations**  
Springfield

**Community Food Cupboard**  
Manchester Center

**Congregational Church of Rupert**  
Rupert

**COVER Home Repair**  
White River Junction

**Cradle to Grave Arts, Inc**  
Chelsea

**Danville Vermont Historical Society**  
Danville

**Ethan Allen Homestead Museum**  
Burlington

**Expeditionary School at Black River**  
Ludlow

**Fairbanks Museum & Planetarium**  
St. Johnsbury

**First Baptist Church of Manchester Center**  
Manchester Center

**Fletcher Farm Foundation. Inc.**  
Ludlow

**Fletcher Free Library**  
Burlington

**Fletcher Memorial Library**  
Ludlow

**Franklin County Industrial Development Corporation**  
St. Albans

**Franklin County Regional Chamber of Commerce**  
St. Albans



"Their efforts are vital to keeping our rural communities vibrant and connected as we lose local media outlets across the state!" – Gregory Tatro, Co-Founder, Jenna's Promise

**Green Mountain Academy for Lifelong Learning**

Dorset

**Green Mountain Technology and Career Center**

Hyde Park

**Hartford Area Career and Technology Center**

White River Junction

**Hartford Historical Society**

Hartford

**Hartford School District**

White River Junction

**Hartland Elementary School**

Hartland

**Henry Sheldon Museum of Vermont History**

Middlebury

**HomeShare Vermont**

South Burlington



“One of the things that makes this state great is that Vermonters can count on reliable, local media for their news. Especially for older Vermonters, some continuity in the media landscape is crucial and a huge benefit.” – Connor Timmons, ED, HomeShare Vermont

**Huntington Historical and Community Trust**

Huntington

**Ilsley Public Library**

Middlebury

**In Tandem Arts**

Burlington

**Jenna's Promise**

Johnson

**Junction Dance Festival**

Norwich

**Lamoille Family Center**

Morrisville

**Lamoille North Unified Education Association**

Hyde Park

**Lamoille Union Athletic Department**

Hyde Park

**Lamoille Union High School Music Department**

Hyde Park

**Lanpher Memorial Library**

Hyde Park

**Laraway Youth & Family Services**

Johnson

**Ludlow Area Rotary Club**

Ludlow

**Ludlow Insurance Agency, Inc.**

Ludlow

**Lyndon Institute**

Lyndon Center

**Mad River Valley Chamber of Commerce**

Waitsfield

**Manchester Community Library**

Manchester Center

**Maple Street School**

Manchester

**Migrant Justice**

Burlington

**Montpelier Alive**

Montpelier

**Mount Ascutney School District**

Windsor

**Norman Williams Public Library**

Woodstock

**Northeast Kingdom Chamber of Commerce**

Lyndon Center

**Northshire Rescue Squad**

Manchester

**Northwest Career and Technical Center**

St. Albans

**Northwestern Medical Center**

St. Albans

**Norwich Public Library**

Norwich

**Off Center for the Dramatic Arts**

Burlington

**One Night Only: a 24-hour play festival**

Thetford Center

**Paramount Center Inc**

Rutland



“Community Media Centers are critical to the vitality of our region, enabling people to learn about issues of concern, to engage with others in building more vibrant communities, and to have a sense of belonging and connectedness.” – Sarah Jackson, ED, Vital Communities

**Parish Players**

Thetford

**PechaKucha Night Burlington**

Underhill

**Preservation Burlington**

Burlington

**Pride Center of Vermont**

Burlington

**Raq-On Dance**

White River Junction

**Revolution**

White River Junction

**Richford First Baptist Church**

Richford

**Rotary Club of St. Albans**

St. Albans

**Rotary Club of Woodstock**

Woodstock

**Rutland County Humane Society**

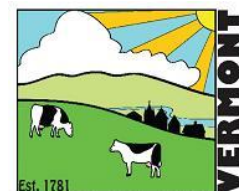
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**Rutland Herald**

Rutland

**Rutland Historical Society**

Rutland



“A vital link between local government and community - no other option for most small towns.” – Ron Rodjenski, Town Administrator, Hyde Park

**Senior Solutions**  
Springfield

**Shaker Bridge Theatre**  
White River Junction

**Southern Vermont Arts Center**  
Manchester

**Southwest Vermont Supervisory Union**  
Bennington

**Southwestern Vermont Chamber of Commerce**  
Bennington



“CAT-TV, is a treasure trove of local stories, information, and community engagement. It is a platform where the voice of Bennington residents can be heard and where local businesses, organizations, and individuals can showcase their products, services, and talents to a wide audience.” – Matt Harrington, ED, Southwestern VT Chamber of Commerce

**Springfield Town Library**  
Springfield

**St James Episcopal Church**  
Arlington

**St Peter's Episcopal Church**  
Bennington

**St. Johnsbury Athenaeum**  
St. Johnsbury

**St. Johnsbury History and Heritage Center**  
St. Johnsbury

**TecGym Inc**  
Springfield

**The Center for Cartoon Studies**  
White River Junction

**The Collaborative**  
Londonderry

**The Congregational Church, UCC of Middlebury**  
Middlebury

**The Federated Church Of East Arlington**  
Arlington

**The Green Mountain Book Festival**  
Burlington

**The MINT, Rutland's Makerspace**  
Rutland

**The Wilson House of East Dorset**  
Dorset

**Thetford Academy**  
Thetford Center

**Town Hall Theater**  
Middlebury



“Our community media center is a key and crucial partner to our arts programming - filming and showing free content via public access. They are also integral to many education programs for all ages, covering local civic content, and much more.” – Lisa Mitchell, ED. Town Hall Theater

**Town of Bennington VT**  
Bennington

**Town of Hyde Park**  
Hyde Park

**Town of Montgomery**  
Montgomery

**Town of Morristown**  
Morrisville

**Town of Pawlet**  
Pawlet

**Town of Shaftsbury**  
Shaftsbury

**Town of Springfield**  
Springfield

**Town of St Johnsbury**  
St. Johnsbury

**Town of Windsor**  
Windsor

**Underhill Climate Change Task Force**  
Underhill

**United Way of Addison County**  
Middlebury

**United Way of Rutland County**  
Rutland

**Upper Valley Aquatic Center**  
White River Junction

**Upper Valley Haven**  
White River Junction

**UVM Medical Center**  
South Burlington

**Vermont Adult Learning**  
Middlebury

**Vermont Arts Council**  
Montpelier

**Vermont Humanities**  
Montpelier

**Vermont Interfaith Action**  
Burlington

**Vermont Stage**  
Burlington

**Vermont State Colleges System**  
Montpelier

**Village of North Bennington**  
Bennington

**Vital Communities**  
White River Junction

**We the People Theatre**  
Thetford



“Community Media Centers are an important educational resource for individuals who may not otherwise have access to the communications tools and technology provided by traditional and tuition-based educational pathways. Additionally, they provide a safe environment to foster civil discourse, and encourage greater civic engagement and community building.” – Janine Fleri, Director of Development and Communications, Vermont Adult Learning

**Weston Theater Company**  
Weston

**Windsor Public Library**  
Windsor

**Windsor Southeast Supervisory Union**  
Windsor

**Windsor Vermont Historical Association**  
Windsor