



**BCRC**  
*Bennington County Regional Commission*

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27 August 2020

June E. Tierney, Commissioner  
Vermont Department of Public Service  
112 State Street  
Montpelier, VT 05620-2601

Commissioner Tierney,

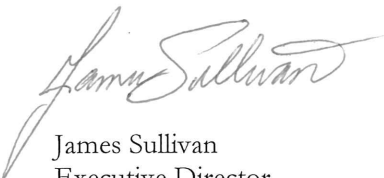
The Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC) strongly supports Governor Scott's proposed allocation of grant funding to Vermont's Communications Union Districts (CUDs). As you know, this initiative would direct the funds to the Department of Public Service (DPS) for allocation to the districts. This grant will allow the growing number of CUDs, including the recently-formed Southern Vermont CUD in Bennington County, to accelerate and elevate their deployment of connectivity solutions in this dire time.

The CUD approach is a remarkable one: volunteer-run political subdivisions of the State of Vermont, formed to bring Internet service to underserved areas of the state. Their creation was a mutually-affirming act of the General Assembly and the constituent municipalities: the Legislature created the framework for the creation and operation of CUDs, and towns subsequently voted at individual town meeting days whether to join. In Bennington County, all twelve towns that placed the question on their ballots voted to join. With no taxing authority, newer CUDs like the Southern Vermont CUD face significant financial hurdles. This grant will go a long way toward allowing CUDs across the state to fulfill their missions.

The BCRC has been assisting the Southern Vermont CUD for several months, providing some staffing and administrative capacity while the organization begins to develop. Our partnership has helped secure \$182,000 in state, federal, and philanthropic funding for a feasibility study, a business plan, pole surveys in the towns of greatest need (Peru, Dorset, Rupert, and Sandgate), insurance coverage, and ancillary staff support from BCRC. The CUD's mission aligns perfectly with our federally-approved Southern Vermont Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (with Windham County), so much so that the CUD was recently identified as one of the two-county region's "most vital projects."

We hope that you will share this letter with members of the General Assembly as you see fit, and we again express our thanks to Governor Scott for including this vital funding in the budget currently under review.

Sincerely,



James Sullivan  
Executive Director  
Bennington County Regional Commission

