

My name is Jeremy Hansen and I am a Computer Science professor at Norwich University

I teach networking, security, and related topics. I also serve on the Berlin Selectboard, so I am coming at this as both a municipal official and a tech geek.

I am here as founder and chair of the governing board of CVFiber, a communications union district mentioned on page 51 of the Telecommunications Plan.

First of all, I'd like to commend Clay Purvis and his team at DPS for putting all of this together. I'm sure it's clear to everyone here that something as broad as telecommunications policy for an entire state covers a lot of ground, and this report was a heavy lift and delivered an impressive amount of information but is necessarily incomplete.

I'm going to restrict my comments to communications union districts and their role in driving positive change in telecommunications in Vermont.

I support the Plan's conclusions about legislative changes to Public Records law, municipal bonding, and David Healy's suggestion that maps and data need improvement.

I'm looking ten years down the road and envisioning a network of Communications Union Districts across the state of Vermont to help us meet the goals set in 30 VSA 202c, which aims to connect every E911 address with 100 Mbps. In fact, there is movement afoot in several places to help people get started building their own districts sooner than later.

Because we're a municipality, we anticipate issuing revenue bonds to cover our infrastructure investments as soon as we become eligible to do so. This requires roughly 3-5 years of audited financials to be eligible, so it's those first few years where Communications Union Districts are in a bit of a chicken-and-an-egg situation and have to be fiscally creative to actually get off the ground. Having a source of financing to get us to revenue bonds is really important. Once we can issue bonds, we can pay back the earlier funding sources, but I'll get back to this later.

First I want to back up a little bit for some context to talk about how the Legislature can help.

Two thrusts of funding to consider:

- getting to the last handful of people who are totally unserved
- getting "real" high-speed Internet access to a large portion of people (statutory goal)

Connectivity Fund: This is responsible for getting to the last handful of totally unserved people. This is very expensive. Lots of this money is going to large for-profit incumbents. Some of it is going to Vermont entities like ECFiber. The governor's proposed budget adds roughly 1 million dollars to this fund.

The governor's proposed budget also includes roughly a half-million dollars for loan guarantees through VEDA in cooperation with ACCD to guarantee favorable loans for small organizations like CVFiber. I'm not entirely sure that we would be able to take advantage of this pool of money, but I'm happy to be corrected.

On the other hand, I can't tell you how happy I am to hear that there will be 12 million dollars in a revolving loan fund, which will be available to communications union districts like ours to get us

started with achieving our mission of connecting every residence, business, and civic institution with truly high-speed Internet service. That gets us through the first few years until we can pay it back with municipal revenue bonds. We truly appreciate this particular investment in Vermont's modern infrastructure.