

Dear Members of Senate Finance Committee,

I represent Waterville and Cambridge, two towns in Lamoille County that could substantially benefit from the passage of H.513: An act relating to broadband deployment throughout Vermont. All of Waterville, as well as a large portion of Cambridge, does not have access to broadband Internet. This means that any Internet we have is at speeds slower than 25 Mbps download / 3 Mbps upload.

H.513 is a bill that would have real, on-the-ground results for Vermont citizens residing in towns like Cambridge and Waterville. In the case of Cambridge, I met with the town's planning commission to discuss possible routes forward if H.513 passes. Within the existing Federal framework, there are two methods by which Cambridge could proceed. First, the town could construct its own fiber optic network, forming a town-operated Internet service provider. If this method were pursued, Cambridge would benefit from H.513 by applying for a grant to study the feasibility of this method. Later, Cambridge would have the potential to benefit from the VEDA loans outlined in H.513 to offset the initial cost of stringing the fiber.

In the second method, Cambridge could form a public-private partnership with either Stowe Cable or Consolidated Communications. The utility company would string the fiber, and the town would bond to guarantee payback for the company's building costs. With the passage of H.513, Cambridge would have the option of taking advantage of the lower interest rate and lower risk of using a VEDA loan for this purpose.

Finally, Cambridge could take advantage of the new Rural Broadband Technical Assistance Specialist position to help in coordinating either one of these plans.

In the case of Waterville, the options are similar to those of Cambridge, so Waterville could similarly benefit from the grants, loans, and technical assistance included in H.513.

The importance of expanding quality Internet access throughout Vermont seems to be well understood in this building, so I will not dwell on that importance here. However, I do want to briefly add my own perspective. As a young person living in a rural part of the state, broadband access is crucial when I look ahead to future economic and academic opportunities. Ultimately, broadband will factor in significantly as my peers and I consider the viability of structuring our adult lives around rural Vermont.

Thank you very much for your time during this busy part of the session.

Respectfully,

Representative Lucy Rogers  
Waterville, VT