



Lamoille FiberNet

www.lamoillefiber.net

Vermont House Energy & Technology Committee Testimony
January 14, 2021

Introduction

- Founded in July 2020 — we represent eight towns:
 - Belvidere
 - Cambridge
 - Eden
 - Hyde Park
 - Johnson
 - Morristown
 - Stowe
 - Waterville
- The population of the region we serve is approximately 23,000 total, with addresses located on over 600 road miles.



The Need

- The pandemic has shown that having reliable, high-speed internet and the ability to do remote work, schooling or telehealth is as essential as having electricity, water and other critical infrastructure.
- Most of the broadband in our region ranges from non-existent to sparse, with tremendous inequities in terms of access.
- Even households and businesses with speeds that are considered “adequate” struggle if there are two or more devices using the internet.

Updates

- Our greatest asset is our active, deeply engaged board — as seen by how much has been accomplished in only six months:
 - Completed start-up administration: policies, insurance, etc.
 - Completed feasibility study; results show that our CUD is financially feasible.
 - Conducted pole study in priority areas: Cambridge, Waterville, Belvidere, Eden and Johnson.
 - Partnered with two area supervisory unions to extend internet access to students who did not have other options for remote learning (second round of CARES Act funding). Also extended access for two libraries.
 - Developing business plan that will be completed in a few weeks.



Greatest Needs

- We have three to four ISPs eager to expand in our region, some of whom have federal subsidies from RDOF, i.e., subsidies that we cannot access, and which give a strong construction advantage, especially given Lamoille FiberNet's emphasis on serving all addresses within a few years — not just the ones that generate significant revenue. With this changed context, we need State funding maintain our viability in the broadband landscape. The funding for Lamoille FiberNet — whether a loan or grant funding — is needed for administration, design, engineering, and construction (loans obviously increase the cost).
- Also, to inform our planning and long-term projects, we need clarity as soon as possible on whether and how much of the CARES Act funding will be available to CUDs.
- If, in 2021, we build one-fifth of our 600 road miles, it would cost approximately \$4 million, (at \$33,000/mile).

