

A BRIEFER HISTORY OF THE VTA
(VERMONT TELECOMMUNICATIONS AUTHORITY)

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HISTORY OF THE VTA

- Sources include:
 - Legislation
 - VTA annual reports
- Act 79 (2007)
 - An act relating to establishing the Vermont Telecommunications Authority to advance broadband and wireless communications infrastructure throughout the State
 - Approved by Governor Douglas June 9, 2007
 - Complete text can be found [here](#)

ACT 79 (2007) – SOME PROVISIONS OTHER THAN VTA

- Broadband Development Grant Program
- Municipalities authorized to issue revenue bonds for communications plant and service
- Cable line extension requirements – modifications permitted if provide broadband
- Pole attachment rules include broadband attachments
- ROW usage provisions expanded to include broadband
- PSB proceeding on the role of electric companies in furthering telecom deployment
- Section 248a enacted (sunset July 1, 2010)

ACT 79 – VTA PROVISIONS, IN RELEVANT PART

- Goal of VTA
 - All addresses have access to affordable broadband **by end of 2010**
 - Priority for equipment capable of 3 Mbps; service plan with 1.5 Mbps in at least one direction
 - Ubiquitous availability of mobile telecom (voice and data) **by end of 2010**
- *In 2011, extended to **2013**.*
- *In 2014, State policy amended to specify goal of 100/100 Mbps by **2024***

VTA ORGANIZATION

- Board of Directors – **11 members**
 - Treasurer
 - Secretary of Administration
 - VEDA
 - 2 public members appointed by Speaker
 - 2 public members appointed by Committee on Committees
 - 2 public members appointed by Governor
 - 2 public members appointed jointly by Governor, Speaker, Pro Tem (Chair and Vice Chair)
- *2011 amendments – 9 members*
 - *No VEDA; public members revised to: 1/1/5/0, respectively; and legislators okay*
 - *Governor selects Chair and Vice Chair*

VTA PURPOSE, POWERS, AND DUTIES

- Establish partnerships; provide assistance; facilitate efforts
- Provide loans, grants, guarantees
- Issue bonds backed by project revenues of the State, or both
- Work with VEDA and Muni Bond Bank
- Coordinate funding opportunities
- Receive and accept grants, etc.
- Form a nonprofit
- Broker access to reduced prices; waive or reduce State fees

VTA PURPOSE, POWERS, AND DUTIES (CONT'D)

- Own, acquire, sell, trade and lease infrastructure
- Advise municipalities
- Obtain permits
- Market State property for collocation
- Consult on charges for use of State property, easements, and ROW and waiver criteria
- Sue and be sued
- Administer and invest its own funds
- Borrow money
- No retail sales of telecom services

ACT 54 (2009) – VTA FINDING

- The VTA has made significant progress toward, and should continue going forward as the primary vehicle for, achieving the goal of realizing universal availability of adequate mobile telecommunications and broadband services, with a focus on unserved and underserved areas in the state. (Finding 19.)

VTA 2010 ANNUAL REPORT

- Submitted January 1, 2011
- Full report can be found [here](#). Excerpt from Executive Summary:
- Act 79 created the VTA in 2007 and called for the universal availability of broadband and cellular service throughout the state by the end of 2010
- Neither of these twin charges will be a reality by the original date. Few, if any, foresaw all of the significant changes in Vermont's telecommunications landscape over the last few years, including:
 - The sales of the Vermont operations of Vermont's largest telephone company (Verizon) and Vermont's largest cellular operator (Unicel), the transition of both which stretched into 2009
 - The bankruptcies of the company that acquired Vermont's largest telephone operations (FairPoint) and Vermont's second largest cable operator (Charter)
 - The global financial crisis in 2008, and the subsequent recession
 - The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which promised massive funding for broadband in 2009, and which is beginning to provide it in late 2010

ACT 53 (2011) – FINDINGS RELATED TO VTA

- Of the \$8.9M in State funds appropriated to the VTA for capital investments since 2007:
 - \$6.4M has been awarded to projects
 - \$280K worth of those projects completed to date
- \$2.35M to VTA for operations
- Influx of federal funds in Vermont
 - \$174M in ARRA funds for broadband through NTIA and RUS
 - Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP), NTIA – middle mile
 - Broadband Initiatives Program (BIP), RUS – last mile
 - \$3.5M for broadband mapping
 - \$6.9M in matching federal funds for smart grid
- VTA has \$40M in bonding authority, but no bonds issued to date
- VTA must re-examine its role in light of federal infusion of money and 3-year time limit

ACT 53 (2011) – VTA SUSTAINABILITY REPORT

- Report on VTA's Sustainability Once 100% Coverage Achieved
 - It is not clear what role the VTA intends to play in Vermont's telecommunications landscape after December 31, 2013 when 100 percent broadband and cell coverage have been achieved in Vermont
 - It is not clear what source of revenues, if any, will support the VTA's operations into the future. It is not clear that Vermont taxpayers can continue to sustain the VTA's operational budget, which is \$900,000

ACT 190 (2014) – IN RELEVANT PART

- Established the Division for Connectivity, Agency of Administration
 - *In 2015, became Division for Telecommunications and Connectivity, Department of Public Service*
- VTA Dormancy (§ 8060a)
 - On July 1, 2015, the Division for Connectivity successor in interest to VTA
 - Legislative enactment or JFC order (if GA not in session) can reactivate VTA
 - JFC order only upon finding that, due to an unforeseen change in circumstances, implementation of the Authority's capacity to issue revenue bonds or to accept any new gifts, grants, or contributions would be the most effective means of furthering the State's telecommunications goals and policies