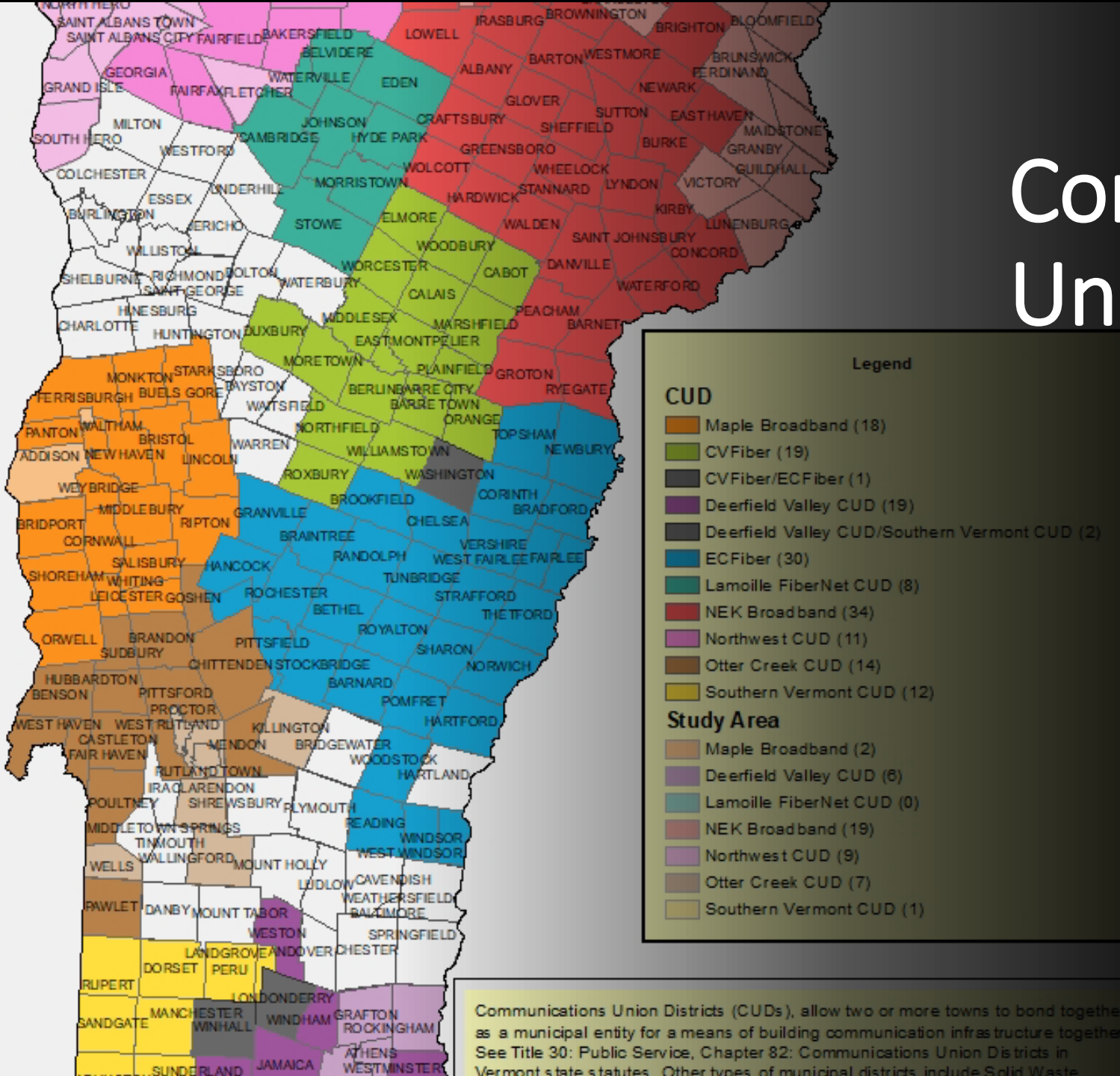


Communications Union Districts

Senate Finance
April 7, 2021



Communications Union Districts (CUDs), allow two or more towns to bond together as a municipal entity for a means of building communication infrastructure together. See Title 30: Public Service, Chapter 82: Communications Union Districts in Vermont state statutes. Other types of municipal districts include Solid Waste

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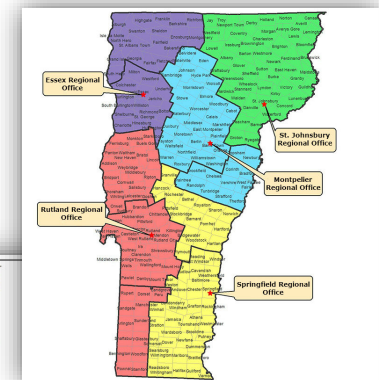
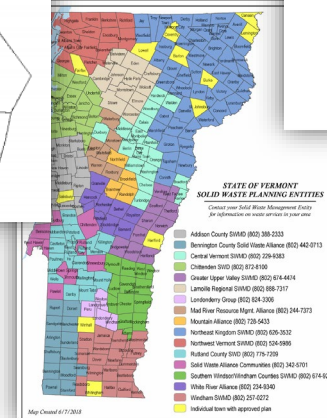
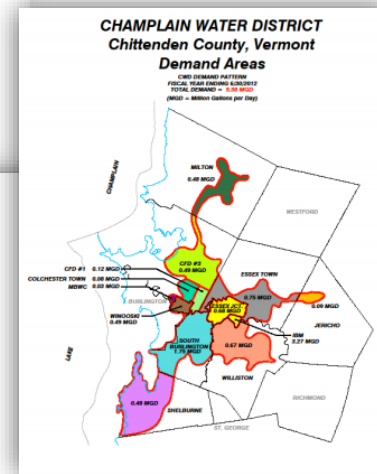
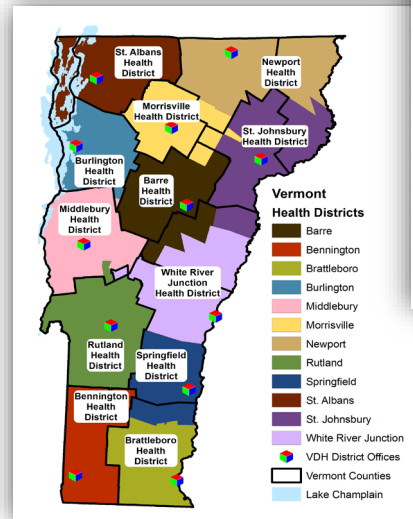
Communications Union Districts

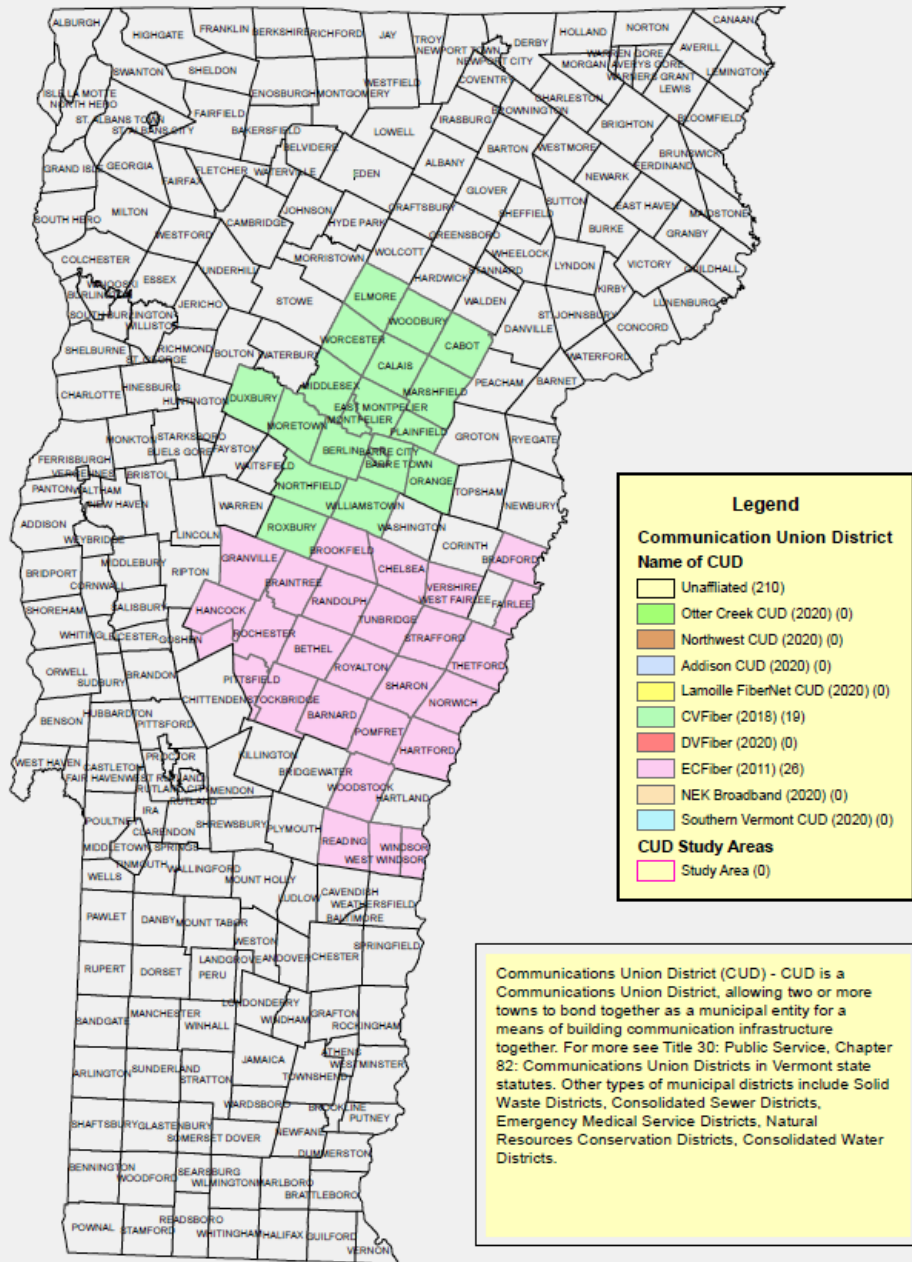
Two or more towns and cities may elect to form a communications union district for the delivery of communications services and the operation of a communications plant.

- Organized under [Title 30: Public Service, Chapter 82: Communications Union Districts \(2015\)](#)

Other types of Municipal Districts:

- Solid Waste Districts*
- Consolidated Sewer Districts*
- Emergency Medical Service Districts*
- Natural Resources Conservation Districts*
- Consolidated Water Districts*





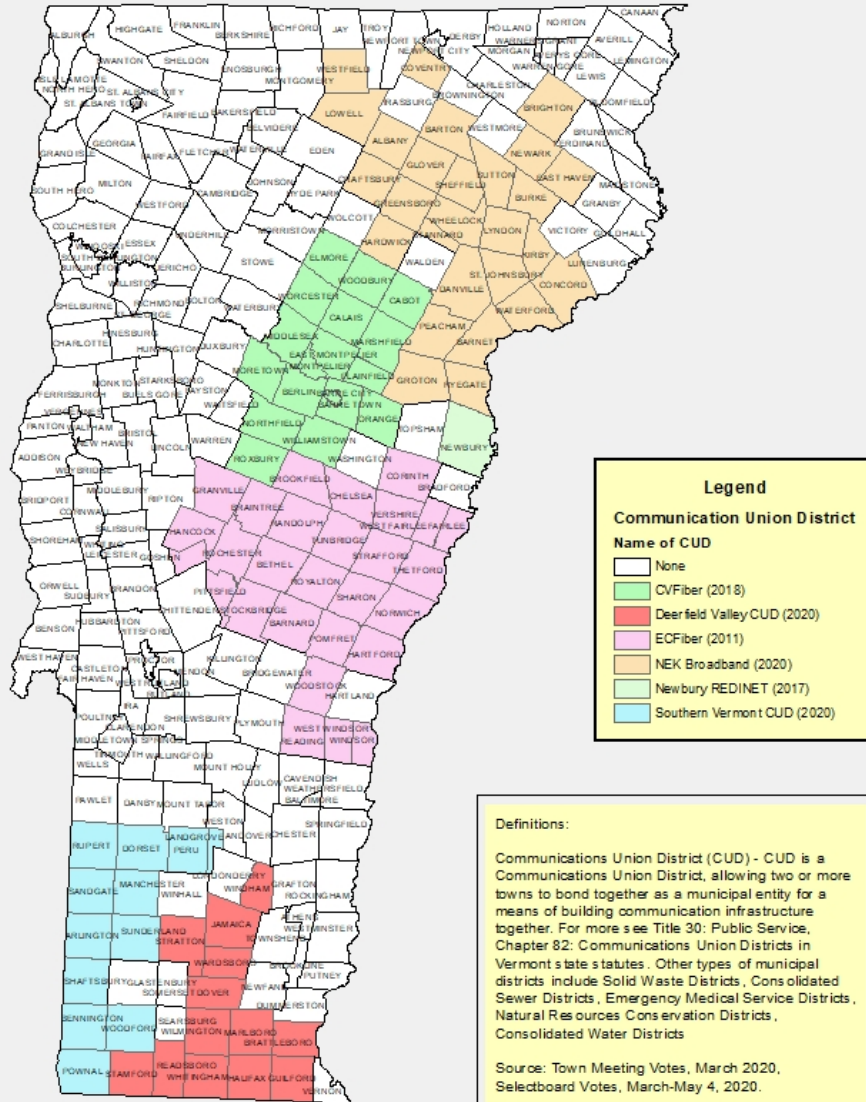
Growth of CUDs

EC Fiber

- 2008 - East Central Vermont Fiber (ECFiber) formed
- 2011 - secured \$1M in insider startup financing in 2011 and built a 20-mile pilot project.
- 2015 – Raised a total of \$7 million in \$2,500 increments on a neighborhood by neighborhood basis from 500 investors.
- 2016 – Became the East Central VT Telecommunications District. Vermont’s first Communications Union District
- 2016 – ECFiber accesses the Revenue Bond Market

CV Fiber

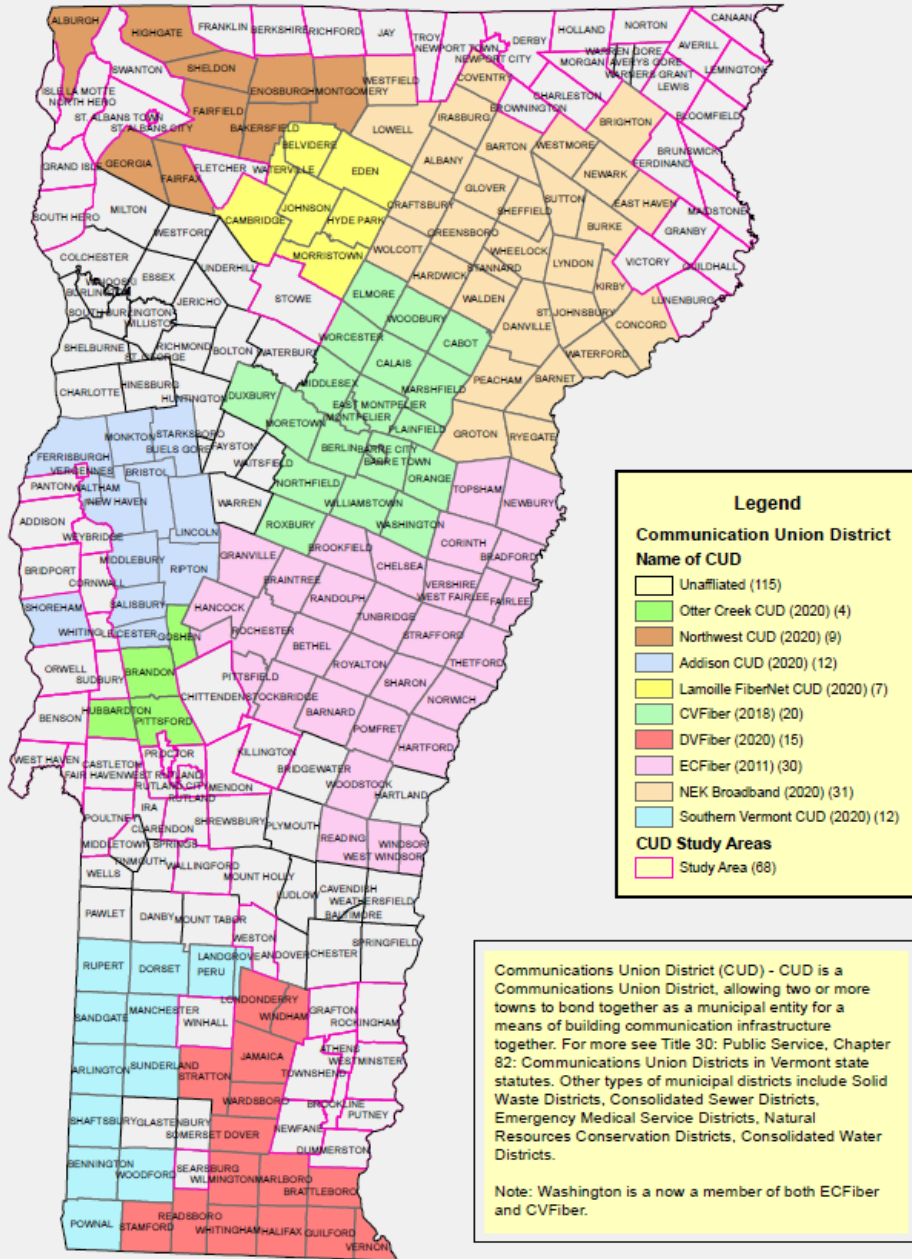
- 2018 – CV Fiber formed at town meeting



Growth of CUDs

Spring 2020

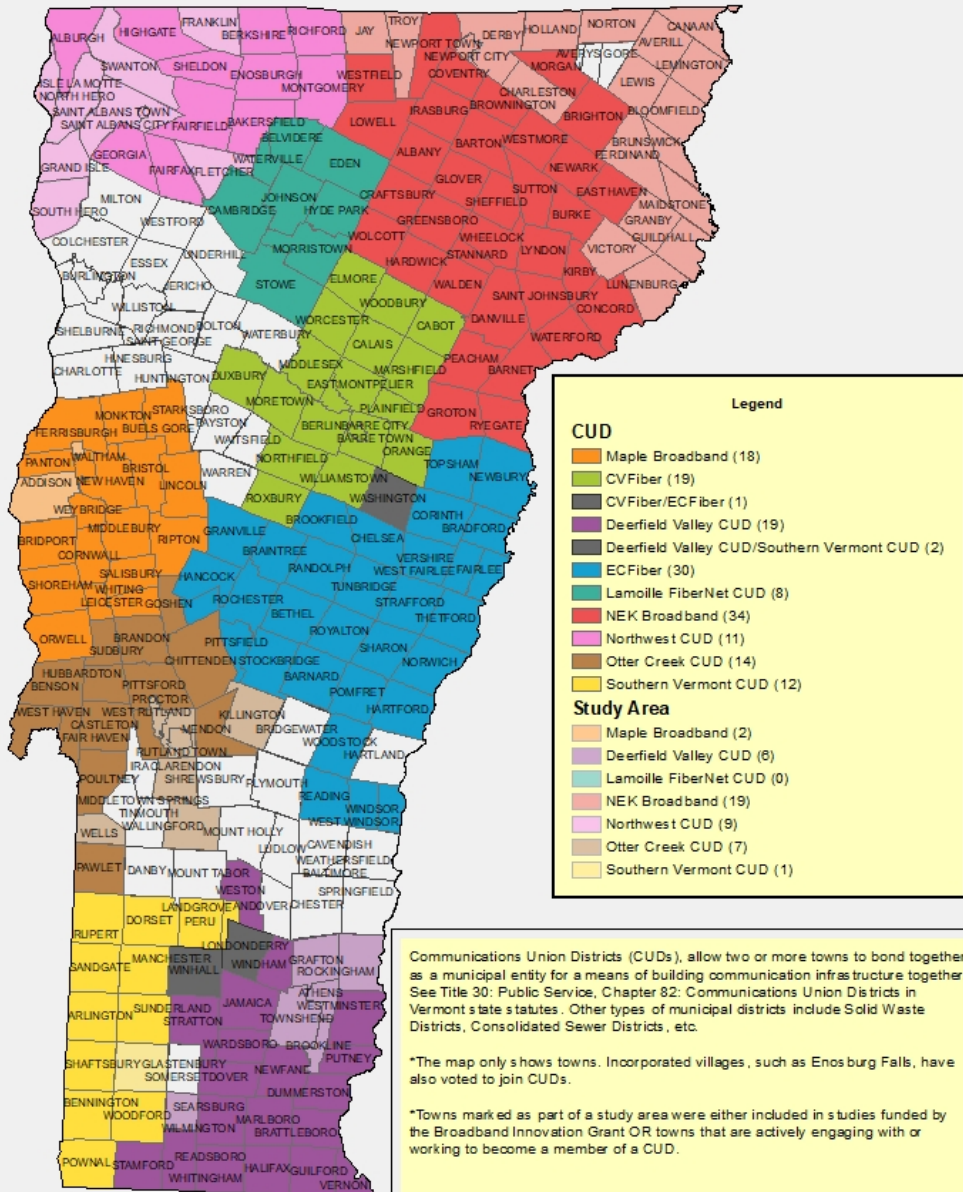
- Deerfield Valley
- Southern Vermont
- NEK



Growth of CUDs

Summer 2020

- Lamoille County CUD
- Otter Creek CUD
- Addison County CUD
- Northwest CUD



Growth of CUDs

Spring 2021

- 9 Districts
- 165 Member Towns
- 44 Towns in Study Areas
- 330 Volunteer Board Reps & Alternates)
- More than half the state's population
- 90% of premise statewide without access to 100/100 broadband

Rural Broadband Technical Assistance Specialist

- Dedicated staff assisting communities with broadband visioning
- Connections to other resources
- Education and outreach
- Fundraising assistance

Broadband mapping

- Helping stakeholders make informed decisions using availability data

Department of Public Service Resources



Broadband Innovation Grant

- Funded feasibility and business planning studies related to deployment of broadband
- \$700,000 total funding (up to \$60,000 per grantee)

Department of Public Service Resources

CARES Act: COVID-Response Connected Community Resilience Program

- \$2.3 Million for Recovery Planning and Infrastructure

CARES Act: Wi-Fi Hot Spots

- 192 hot spots installed
- CUDs assisted with identifying locations

Pre-Construction and Capacity Grant Program (\$1.6M)

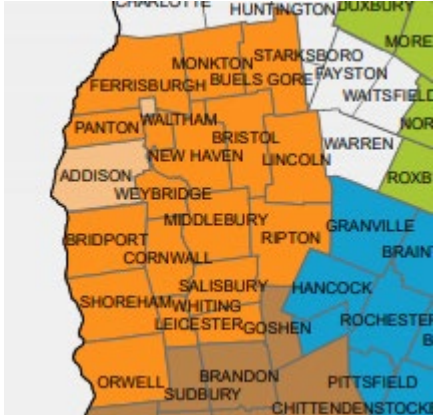
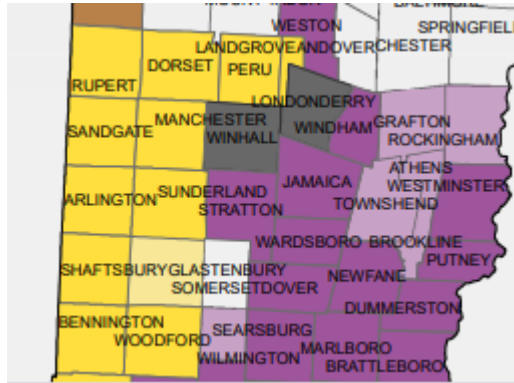
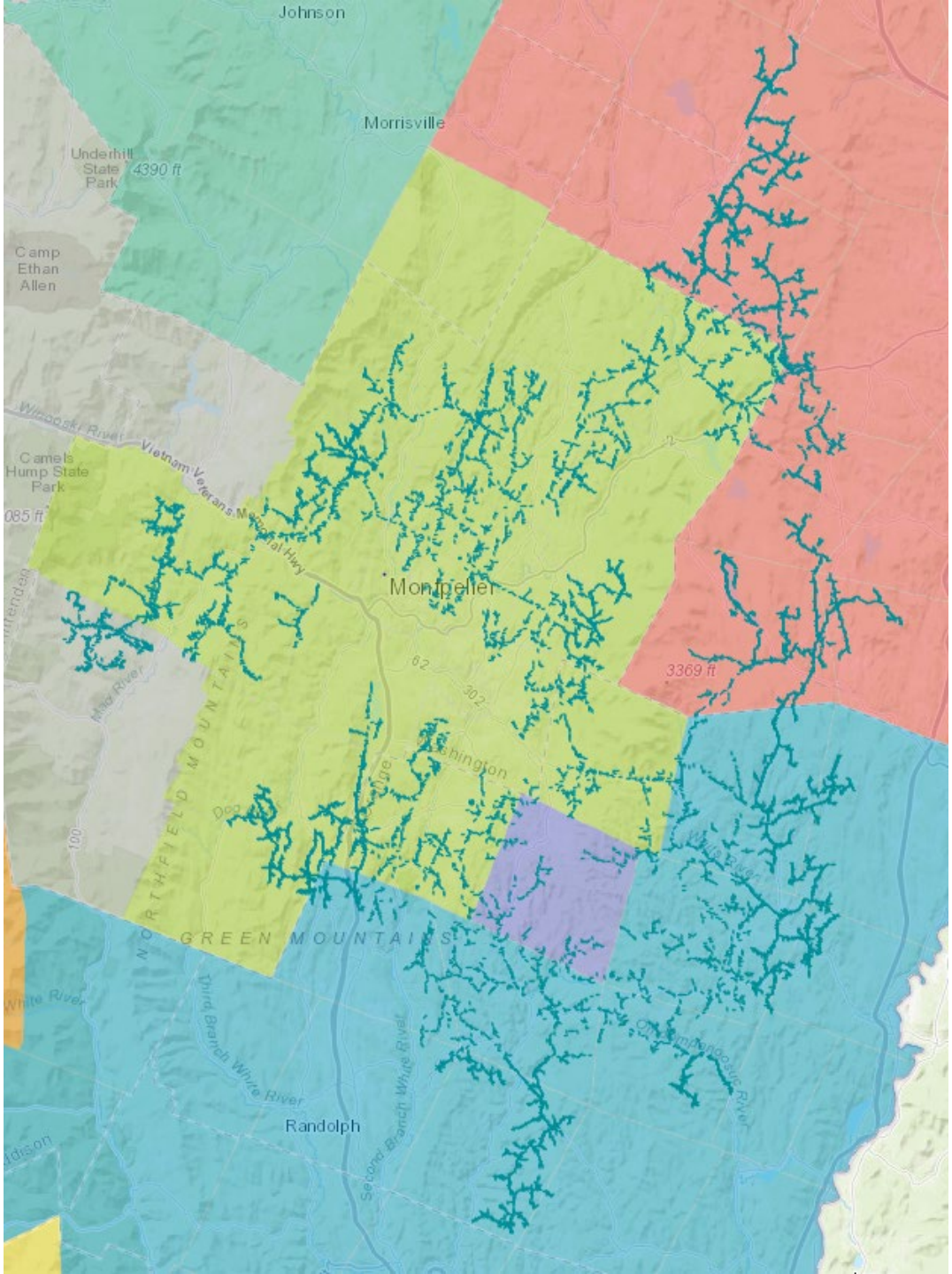
- Pre-Construction and Capacity
- Open to CUDs, groups of CUDs, and close collaborators
- Detailed plans and data that can be leveraged in negotiations with private-providers
- Contribution that can be used to access a VEDA loan
- Creates a binder of shovel-ready projects that can be massaged quickly to meet federal guidelines in any new program

Professional Expertise and Other Support

- Fundraising/Grant-writing
- Legal
- GIS/Mapping
- Other contracted services

H315

High Level Network Design Maple, DV and SoVT



Washington Electric Co-Op – Creative Collaboration



CUD Infrastructure Program

- \$1.5 Million available to the CUDs to assist in covering the “cash contribution” required for financing.
- \$750,000 will be added to the program from Northern Borders RFEP Award.



**Northern
Border
Regional
Commission**

Broadband Project Developer

- \$250,000 from Northern Borders Regional Commission Rural Forest Economy Partnership Program

State Capacity Funds (New)

- Public-Private Collaboration Challenge
- \$1.25M grant awarded to a single CUD collaborating with a private partner for a substantial build-out in the next two years.



Vermont Community Foundation

- CUD Broadband Accelerator
- Support of VCUDA
- General Operating
- Training and technical assistance
- Rural library digital enhancement mini-grants program



THE
Vermont
Community
Foundation



Week 1 | CUD Accelerator - What Is & Why?

Week 2 | CUD Structures & Policies

- Building Internal Capacity
- Open Meeting & FOIA Requests

Week 3 | Financing

- Understand Financing & Terminology
- Bond Market
- Equity Investors
- Fed Grants

Week 4 | State Broadband Policy

- Tennessee Broadband Coalition
- Minnesota Office of Broadband
- Maine Legislator

Week 5 | Planning, Design & Construction

- Using GIS to Make Better Decisions
- Engineering & Design

Week 7 | Community Broadband Providers

- OPALCO/Rock Island
- Open 5g
- GWI
- Shutebury Fiber

Week 8 | State ISP's

- KingdomFiber
- ValleyNet
- WCVT

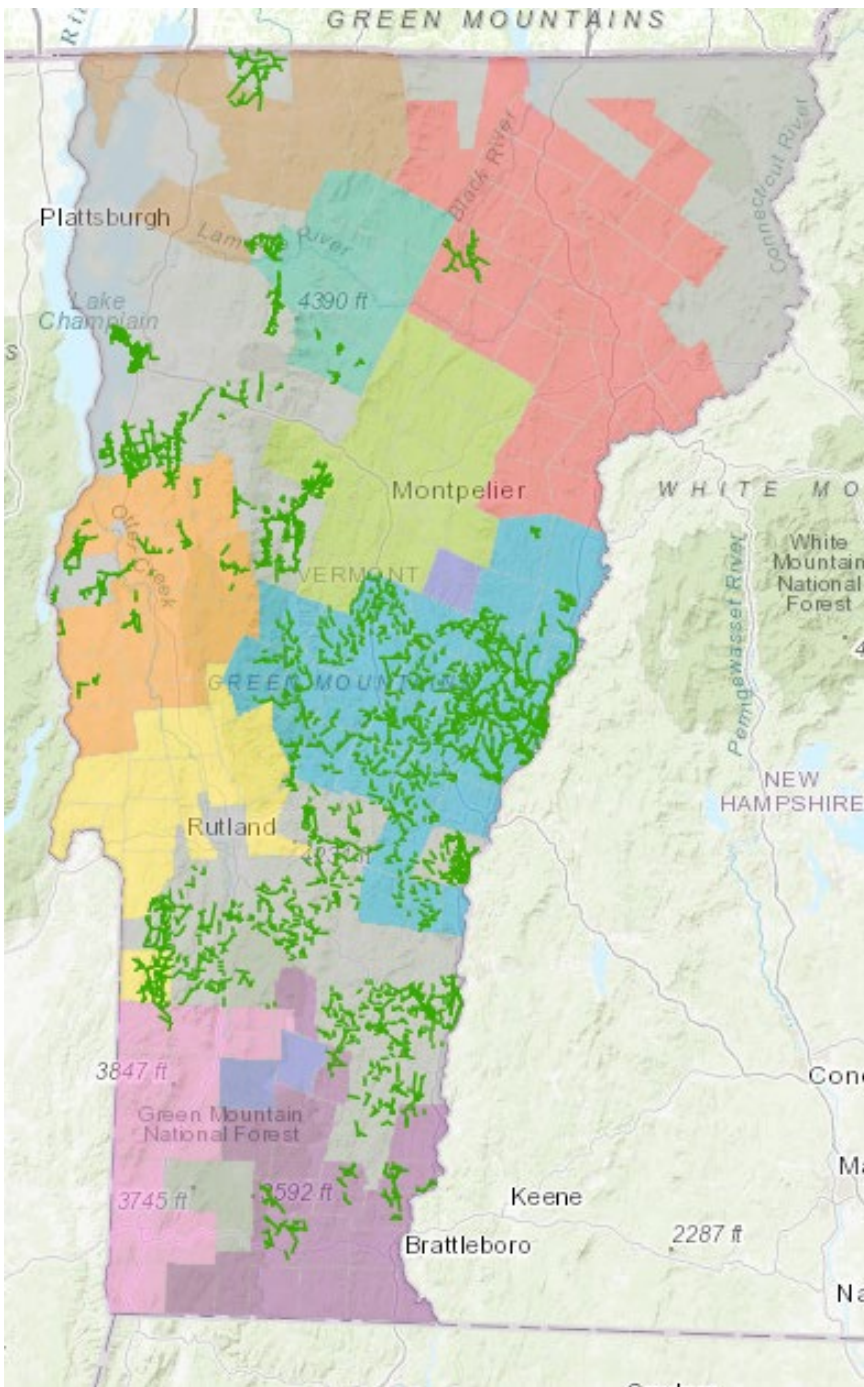
Week 9 | Utility Providers

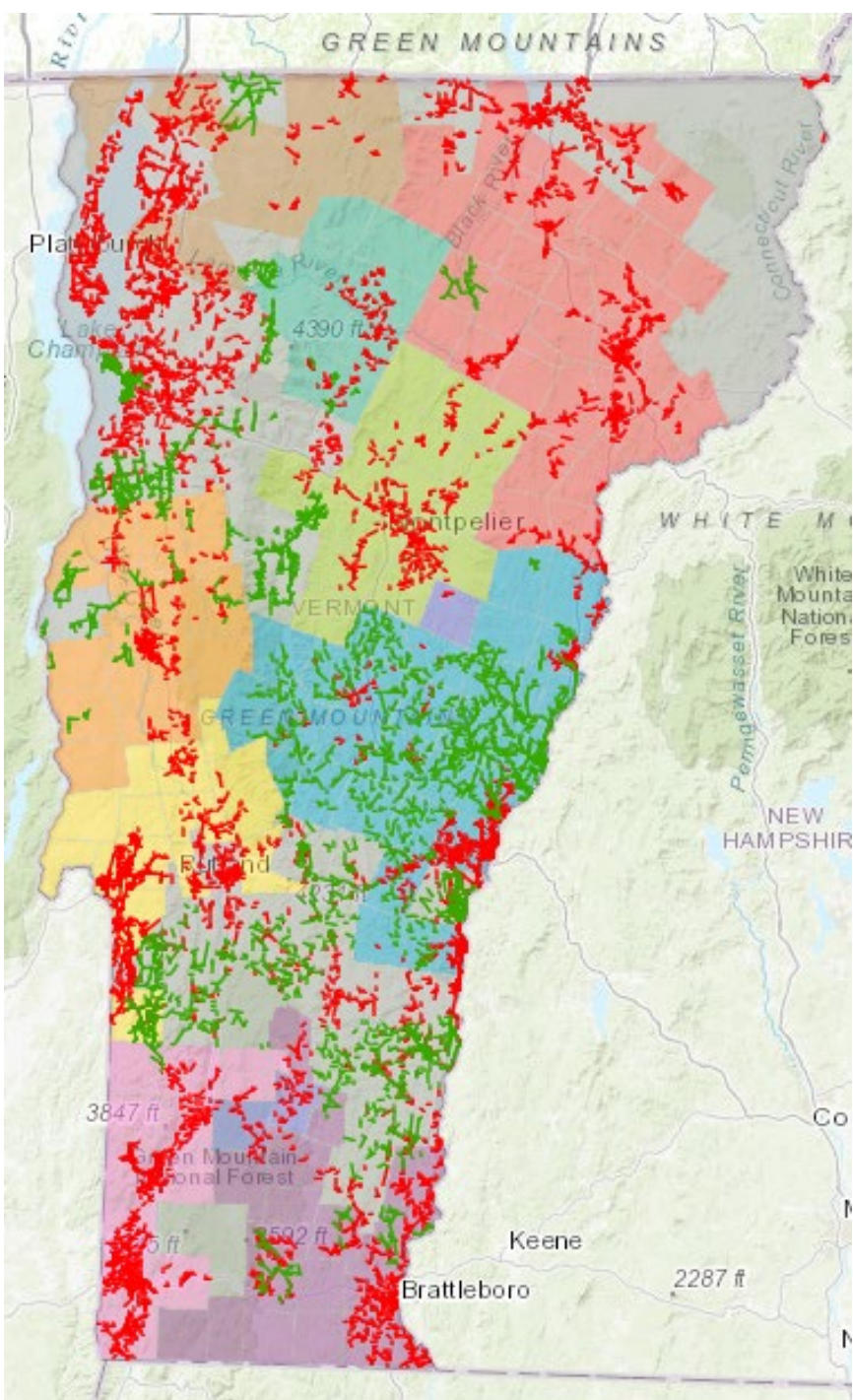
- GMP
- VEC
- VELCO



What's Next

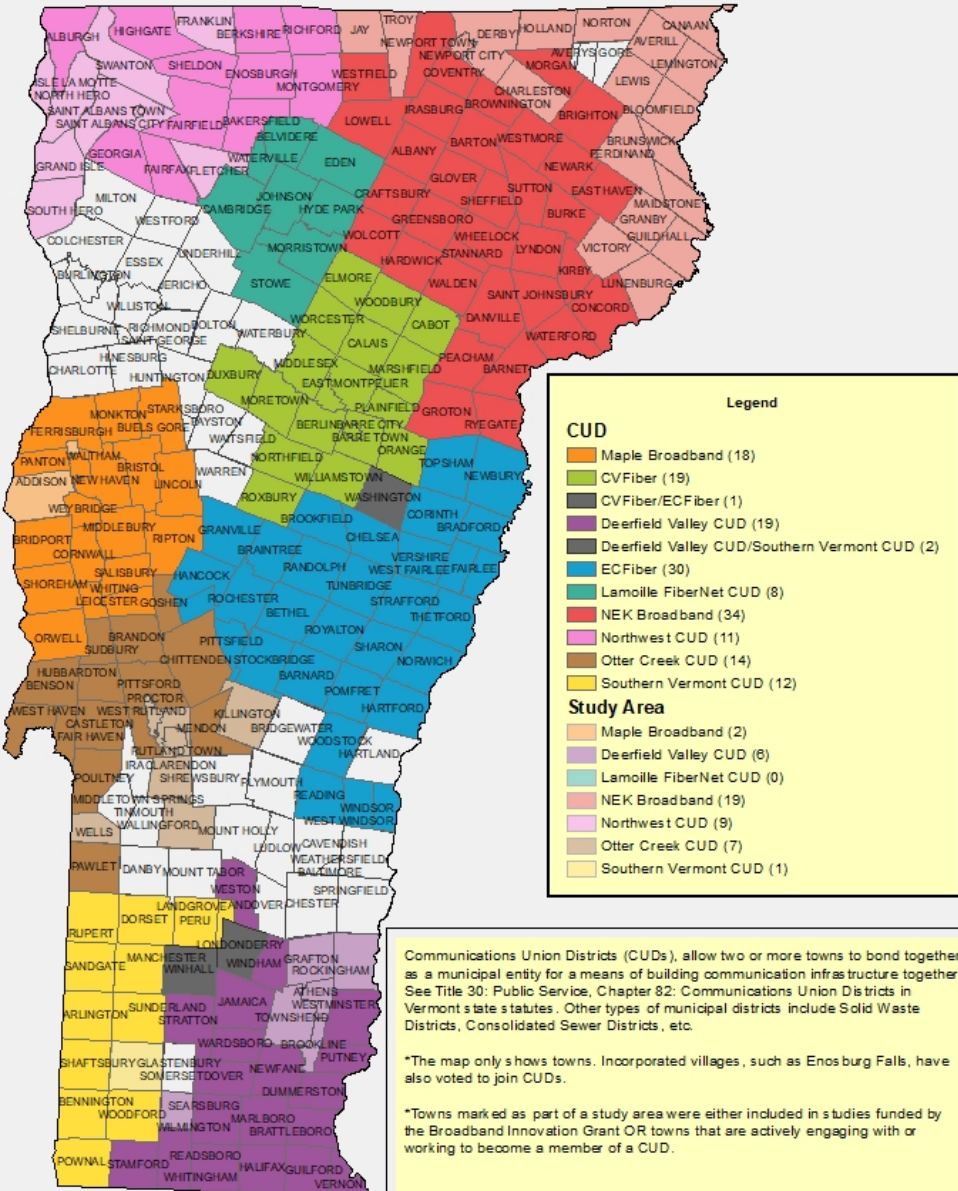
- GREEN shows existing fiber (as of 2019)
- Goal is UNIVERSAL 100/100+ Service
- NOT looking to overbuild existing fiber
- EXCITED to partner with ISPs committed to UNIVERSAL SERVICE
- RFP's issued/applicants being reviewed by outstanding or in the review stage





Communications Union Districts

- At least three CUDs constructing FTTP this year
- All CUDs are actively engaging with private ISPs and seeking partners
- RFP's issued/applicants being reviewed or in the review stage
- “Gate Keepers” “Conduits” “Facilitators”
“Accountability Organizations” “Partners”



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*The map only shows towns. Incorporated villages, such as Enosburg Falls, have also voted to join CUDs.

*Towns marked as part of a study area were either included in studies funded by the Broadband Innovation Grant OR towns that are actively engaging with or working to become a member of a CUD.

Questions?