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Sent: Monday, April 5, 2021 2:55 PM
To: Faith Brown <FBrown@leg.state.vt.us>
Cc: Fish, Robert <robert.fish@vermont.gov>; 'Jane Campbell, Board Member' <info@lamoillefiber.net>; 'Michael Rooney' <mrooney@lamoillefiber.net>
Subject: Written Input to Senate Committee on Finance Hearing: H. 360 - An act relating to accelerated community broadband deployment

Dear Senators:

I offer these comments as an individual although for full disclosure it should be noted that I am also Stowe's representative to the Governing Board of the Lamoille Fibernet Communications Union District.

One of the technologies that some are advocating be eligible for funding is Low Earth Orbit Satellite of which the most prominent at the moment is Starlink. I am writing as a Starlink Beta tester to share my early experiences with Starlink and experience gathered from a limited number of other users. NEK Broadband has been collecting user experience through a survey and their results will be very helpful.

My experience and that of more than ½ of the seven others from whom I have direct feedback is that Starlink has intermittent and unpredictable breaks. My installation, which followed Starlink directions as to location, experiences brief outages (Ping failures) every two to five minutes. They are from obstructions, beta outages, or lack of satellites. This is similar to the experience reported anecdotally from others. The outages are long enough that a phone call may drop or a student would miss the point of the lesson or assignment. At this point Starlink is not sufficient for critical functions such as video conferencing (ZOOM, Webex, etc), VOIP telephone, or WiFi Calling.

The users I have spoken with who have better experience seem to have very wide open installations – an open field, roof top, or chimney. My installation, while on a roof and fairly open, does not clear some surrounding trees. It appears that its functionality is very sensitive to the installation at this time. Starlink asserts that the presence of more satellites over time will improve service and so far does not recommend that I try another location for the dish.

I continue to work with Starlink (it is after all a Beta Test), but so far after more than six weeks located where specified by Starlink the problems persist. At this time I would not recommend the system be relied on for any important purpose including telephone, video conferencing, video education, or tele-med. It is ok for e-mail and moving large files.

I encourage the State to work with the CUDs and the FCC to mount a systematic survey of actual user experience. Financial support of use of Starlink should be withheld until its functionality is proven and/or there is more specific knowledge of exactly where it can be used. It would be a disservice to promote something that is not proven to be reliable, potentially becoming another diversion from a solid long term solution such as fiber.

Sincerely,

Stephen Friedman

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