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Contact: Clay Purvis

802-371-9655

[clay.purvis@vermont.gov](mailto:clay.purvis@vermont.gov)

MEDIA ADVISORY

**Department of Public Service Releases**  
**Draft Emergency Broadband Action Plan for Public Comment**

Montpelier, VT – “The internet is necessary infrastructure that is essential for Vermonters to stay safe when they shelter at home during a crisis, such as the COVID-19 emergency,” said June Tierney, the Commissioner of the Department of Public Service. Today, the Department released a draft of its Emergency Broadband Action Plan, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The draft plan lays out a strategy and action steps for how to get internet service to the nearly 70,000 business and residential locations, or about 23% of the state, that presently do not have access at speeds at or above 25/3 Mbps. Broadband is defined as 25/3 Mbps. Universal access to broadband will help improve the lives of those who struggle to access needed services, telecommute, learn remotely or access telemedicine.

The Department developed this plan in preparation for future federal broadband support with the assumption that Vermont will receive an additional infusion of federal aid to support recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. It also proposes using a reverse auction model to achieve universal broadband in comparatively short order.

The cost estimate for the EBAP buildout is approximately \$300 million and assumes that Vermont will receive an additional infusion of federal aid to support recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The estimated amount of public funding necessary to achieve the goal of the EBAP is \$122 million to \$293 million, depending on the method used to disburse the awarded bid funding. The EBAP proposes two options for disbursing the funding awarded to the auction’s winning bids. The first method simply awards to recipients the full value of their winning bids. The estimated auction cost for this disbursement method is \$293 million. The second method leverages the state’s lending resources through bid award packages that combine 10% grants administered through the Connectivity Fund and 90% loans issued via the Vermont Economic Development Authority. The estimated auction cost for this disbursement option is \$122 million.

The Department welcomes public comments. Comments may be submitted to the Department by email to [psd.telecom@vermont.gov](mailto:psd.telecom@vermont.gov) or by mail to the Department of Public Service, 112 State St. Montpelier, VT 05620-2601. Comments may also be given at the next Telecommunications and Connectivity Advisory Board meeting scheduled for May 21, 2020 at 10 a.m. Information about that meeting will be posted on this webpage in advance of the meeting. **Comments are due by May 26, 2020.**

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Vermont Public Service Department  
112 State Street  
Montpelier, VT 05620-2601

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