



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## VERMONT COMMUNITY BROADBAND BOARD APPROVES \$26.5 MILLION IN GRANTS TO EXPAND BROADBAND TO THOUSANDS OF UNDERSERVED VERMONTERS

Montpelier, Vermont – The Vermont Community Broadband Board (VCBB) approved three grants totaling \$26.45 Million to bring broadband to more than 4,000 underserved Vermont addresses.

\$9.1 million has been awarded to the Maple Broadband/Waitsfield and Champlain Valley Telecom (WCVT) partnership to expand fiber-optic broadband into parts of rural Addison County, including Bridport, Ferrisburgh, New Haven, Panton, Waltham, and Weybridge. The source of the grant funding is the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

This project will extend WCVT’s fiber-to-the-home network to approximately 2,000 additional customers in parts of Addison County in the Waitsfield and Champlain Valley Telecom service area. The network can deliver symmetrical broadband speeds of up to 1 Gigabyte to residents.

The first phase of the newly funded project began in spring of 2022. Engineering, design, and preliminary field work are currently in progress.

“Building a fiber-to-the-home network in rural areas is extremely expensive, and takes time to engineer, construct and build. We would like to thank the Vermont Community Broadband Board for working with us to help expand our fiber-optic network to more customers. Each and every day, our team has been busy building more fiber in our communities and converting customers to high-speed fiber-optics. These grant funds will complement our own capital construction budgets and allow us to build fiber faster than we would otherwise be able to do,” said Eric Haskin, President and CEO of WCVT.

“2023 will be a great year for broadband in Addison County. Recent construction grant awards to WCVT and Maple Broadband will enable both parties to build concurrently and bring fiber internet to residents and businesses in Maple Broadband member towns,” says Ellie de Villiers, Executive Director of Maple Broadband.

“WCVT has been a great partner in terms of getting Vermonters connected to fiber-optic broadband. The Maple Broadband relationship with WCVT is an example of the public-private partnerships that will result in every Vermonter getting the opportunity to connect to reliable high-speed Internet. The VCBB is excited about the forward progress that Vermont is making in terms of Universal Service. This progress is made possible by the partnerships like this one,” added Christine Hallquist, Executive Director of the Vermont Community Broadband Board.

\$8.35 million has been awarded to WCVT to start the first phase of their build-out to bring broadband to 1200 underserved addresses in towns that are not part of a CUD. WCVT is adding full build-out in the town of Charlotte and full build-out in the town of Bolton. WCVT will also begin partial build-out work in seven other towns.

\$9 million has been awarded to Southern Vermont Communications Union District (SoVT CUD). It is partnering with Consolidated Communications to bring broadband to 6,412 addresses across southern Vermont, 1300 of which are currently underserved.

The CUD, in partnership with Consolidated Communications, who will build, maintain and operate the network, expects all unserved and underserved residents in 14 towns in the CUD to have access to multi-gigabit speed internet in 2023 at competitive prices. Service will be delivered by Fidium Fiber, Consolidated Communication’s residential fiber brand.

Eric Hatch, Chair of the SoVT CUD, spoke of the benefits of this grant which many groups and individuals worked on to win. "In true Vermont fashion, our communities came together to solve a long-standing problem that held back our state from competing in today's marketplace. With access to fiber, all 14 towns in the district will have the infrastructure to retain and attract people to southwest Vermont."

“The VCBB and the CUDs are proud to be working closely with these private telecommunication partners. This collaboration results in much lower construction costs which frees up funding for the harder to serve areas of the state. These grants included agreements that will provide ongoing public oversight and accountability,” said VCBB Executive Director Christine Hallquist.

The VCBB has awarded \$90.25 million in construction grants to date. More information on the distribution of the funds is available at

<https://vcbb.maps.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/75eb5dd3e4454c18a31ef25d97b3d3da>

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