

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 21, 2020

Contact: Clay Purvis, Director, Division of Telecommunications and Connectivity

(802)-371-9655

clay.purvis@vermont.gov

MEDIA RELEASE

Vermont Department of Public Service Announces Awards for Round 2 of the COVID-19 Emergency Connectivity Initiative and Get Vermonters Connected Now Initiative

Montpelier, Vermont – The Department of Public Service today announced \$3,991,847 in grant awards to Internet Service Providers to serve over 1,651 eligible locations with broadband connections in response to COVID-19.

The Department awards:

- \$502,000 to ECFiber to extend its fiber network to reach 251 locations
- \$45,691 to Franklin Telephone to extend its fiber network to reach 24 locations
- \$762,662 to Wireless Partners to extend its wireless network to reach 668 locations
- \$142,939 to Spectrum (Charter) to extend its cable broadband service to reach 156 locations
- \$1,789,150 to Tilson to deploy a fiber network to reach 360 locations
- \$749,405 to Waitsfield and Champlain Valley Telecom to extend its fiber network to reach 192 locations

Of those slated to receive service from the grant-funded projects, 804 lack a connection of 4/1 Mbps and 150 were identified as having a telehealth, distance learning, or telework need.

The goal of the COVID-19 Emergency Connectivity Initiative is to use Federal Coronavirus Relief Funds to build high-speed broadband service to unserved and underserved locations by December 30, 2020. The Vermont Legislature, through H.966, also created the Get Vermonters Connected Now Initiative (GVCNI). The GVCNI provides financial assistance to Internet Service Providers to offset customer costs of fiber-to-the-premises installations, such as trenching, conduit installation, and service drops. The two programs target homes lacking connections capable of 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload (25/3 Mbps is the federal definition of broadband) and lend priority to locations with K-12 students and teachers, telehealth patients and providers, and teleworkers. “As we move into the Fall Internet connectivity will be an even more important tool in combating the effects of the public health emergency,” said June Tierney, Commissioner of the Department of Public Service. “This round of the Connectivity Initiative will bring additional fiber-to-the-home broadband to homes in rural Vermont,” added Clay Purvis, Director of Telecommunications and Connectivity at the Department.

The Connectivity Initiative, which began in 2015, funds the expansion of broadband facilities in underserved towns. More than \$4,000,000 in funding remains for the COVID-19 Emergency Connectivity Initiative and Get Vermonters Connected Now Initiative, to be awarded in one more round. The awards were made through a competitive bidding process. In making the awards, the Department sought input from the state's Communications Union Districts, which had the opportunity to oppose projects in their territory they did not find to be in the public interest. For more information on the Connectivity Initiative, please visit the Department of Public Service [Connectivity Initiative webpage](https://publicservice.vermont.gov/content/connectivity-initiative-0) at <https://publicservice.vermont.gov/content/connectivity-initiative-0> .

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

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