Expanding Rural Broadband Access in Vermont

The Vermont Public Service Department is proud to announce an exciting project funded by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) aimed at expanding rural broadband access across the state. This project seeks to bridge the digital divide, ensuring that all Vermonters have access to reliable, high-speed internet connectivity.

Project Goals:

- Connectivity for All: The primary goal of this project is to provide broadband access to unserved and underserved areas of Vermont, including rural communities, remote regions, and economically disadvantaged areas. By doing so, we aim to eliminate the digital divide and promote equal opportunities for education, healthcare, business growth, and overall quality of life.
- High-Speed Internet: We are committed to delivering high-speed internet connections to these areas, with a focus on meeting or exceeding the [Federal Communications Commission's broadband speed standards.](#) This will enable Vermonters to access online resources, participate in remote work and learning, and engage in e-commerce activities seamlessly.
- Reliable Infrastructure: The project will invest in building robust and resilient broadband infrastructure. This will ensure that Vermonters have reliable and consistent internet access, even in challenging terrain or remote locations.
- Oversight – the project will be overseen by the Vermont Community Broadband Board. The board will develop policies and programs to accelerate community efforts that advance the State's goal of achieving universal access to reliable, high-quality, affordable, fixed broadband achieving speeds of at least 100 Mbps symmetrical.

Project Implementation:

- Partnerships: The Vermont Community Broadband Board (VCBB), an independent office within the Public Service Department, will collaborate with Communications Union Districts and local internet service providers to implement this project. By leveraging existing expertise and resources, we aim to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of broadband deployment.
- Mapping and Planning: We will conduct comprehensive mapping and planning exercises to identify areas with limited or no broadband access. This data-driven approach will help prioritize deployment efforts and ensure that resources are allocated where they are most needed.
- Infrastructure Development: The project will involve the construction and installation of broadband infrastructure, including laying fiber-optic cables. Infrastructure investments will be strategically planned to optimize coverage and minimize service gaps.
- Community Engagement: We recognize the importance of engaging with local communities throughout the project. We will conduct public meetings and surveys to gather input from residents, businesses, and community organizations. This collaborative approach will ensure that the project aligns with the unique needs and aspirations of each community.
- Job Creation: The expansion of broadband infrastructure will create job opportunities in Vermont. We are committed to supporting local employment by prioritizing the hiring of local contractors, technicians, and laborers. Additionally, we will work with educational institutions

and workforce development programs to provide training and skill-building opportunities for Vermonters interested in careers in the broadband industry.

- Monitoring and Evaluation: Throughout the project, we will closely monitor the progress and impact of broadband deployment. This will include regular assessments of broadband speeds, coverage areas, and user satisfaction. By collecting and analyzing data, we can make informed decisions and course corrections to ensure the project's success.

Project Timeline:

The ARPA-funded broadband expansion project is expected to be implemented over a multi-year period. The timeline will include various phases, such as mapping and planning, infrastructure development, community engagement, and ongoing monitoring and evaluation. Regular updates will be provided to keep Vermonters informed about the project's progress.

Project Benefits: The successful implementation of this ARPA-funded project will bring numerous benefits to Vermont:

- Equitable Access: By expanding broadband access, we will bridge the digital divide and ensure that all Vermonters have equal opportunities to thrive in the digital age.
- Economic Growth: Reliable high-speed internet will attract businesses, entrepreneurs, and remote workers to Vermont, fostering economic growth and job creation.
- Education and Healthcare: Broadband access will enhance educational opportunities, enabling students to access online resources and participate in remote learning. It will also improve telehealth services, allowing Vermonters to receive quality healthcare remotely.
- Quality of Life: Access to broadband will enhance communication, entertainment, and social connectivity, improving the overall quality of life for Vermonters.

Get Involved: We encourage Vermonters to stay engaged and provide input throughout the project. Visit our website for updates, attend public meetings, and participate in surveys to share your thoughts and help shape the future of broadband access in Vermont.

Together, we can build a connected and inclusive Vermont for all.

###