

STATE OF VERMONT  
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SERVICE  
PUBLIC COMMENTS HEARING

REGARDING:  
THE 2014 VERMONT TELECOMMUNICATIONS PLAN  
Pursuant to 30 V.S.A. § 202d

HELD:  
Thursday, September 18, 2014  
6:00 p.m.  
Barrett Memorial Hall  
Vermont Route 132  
South Strafford, Vermont

BEFORE:  
Jim Porter, DPS, Moderator  
Clay Purvis, DPS

REPORTED BY: MARILEE JAYE YOUNG, CSR

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1                   THE MODERATOR: All right. I guess  
2 we'll go ahead and get started.

3                   First off, thank you for coming tonight.  
4 This is Public Hearing on the 2014  
5 Telecommunications Plan Draft, Comments edition.  
6 What we'd like to do, I'd also like to thank Senator  
7 Mark MacDonald. He always takes a great interest in  
8 all things telecom and broadband at the legislature,  
9 and he reminded us that this might be a good place  
10 to have some hearings. And we've -- this is our  
11 second one today, so I appreciate that one, Mark.  
12 And, as I couldn't call Clay, tell him I was being  
13 late, I think this is a really good place to come  
14 and discuss the Telecommunications Plan.

15                  My name is Jim Porter. I am with the  
16 Department of Public Service. Clay Purvis also  
17 works with me. We would like to take any comments  
18 you have about the Plan and then, once we're done  
19 with that, we're happy to take any questions or have  
20 any discussions about anything telecom related that  
21 you might be interested in. And looks like we've  
22 got a court reporter so, when you talk, if you could  
23 just come up, I guess have a seat in this chair, and  
24 just say your name.

25                  And, with that, we'll get started. Does

1 anybody like to go first?

2 CHUCK SHERMAN: Well, you've heard me  
3 before.

4 THE MODERATOR: I've heard some of you  
5 before, but that's okay, we still like to hear it.

6 CHUCK SHERMAN: I spoke up in Barre.  
7 My name's Chuck Sherman, S-h-e-r-m-a-n. I learned  
8 that. And I've already watched a video of my  
9 comments on video, so I don't have much more to add.  
10 I'm here more to hear what my neighbors and others  
11 have to say. But it's good to see you again.

12 THE COURT: Good to see you. Thank  
13 you.

14 THE MODERATOR: Okay, neighbors and  
15 friends.

16 Senator, do you think maybe, if you talked,  
17 other people would talk, or do you want to talk?

18 MARK MacDONALD: I spoke at the last  
19 two, but I'm Mark MacDonald. First, I'd like to  
20 thank the Department for coming down to this part of  
21 Orange County and northern Windsor County, which are  
22 just about the most difficult area of the state to  
23 serve, which is why it's been so frustrating for  
24 those who live here.

25 Broadband is much like electricity was a

1 century ago. There are places to build out that  
2 companies find profitable and there are places to  
3 build out that companies will not come to without  
4 some sort of subsidy. The 2009 stimulus package  
5 that passed the U.S. Congress subsidized the easy  
6 stuff and has sort of left the difficult areas  
7 unaddressed. This is a departure in how government  
8 has tried to level the playing field to provide  
9 services to all its citizens. With electricity, the  
10 federal government came in and helped to serve the  
11 places that the companies would not serve. And it's  
12 been suggested that the companies won't come in to  
13 Orange County because they can't recoup their  
14 investments quickly enough. What we are getting are  
15 often FairPoint and then some of the other --  
16 other -- in other areas of the state where a  
17 telephone or companies provide cheap almost-  
18 already-obsolete connections and then exercise a  
19 monopoly-like authority over them and charge prices  
20 that would not be chargeable if there had been real  
21 competition. I didn't think anybody in this room  
22 would -- would argue that, without a world-class  
23 broadband, this county is watching its citizens  
24 leave, whether it's so that students can do their  
25 school work or whether professionals can operate in

1 the world economy.

2           One of the comments that we had this  
3 afternoon and that many have echoed is there seems  
4 to be a bias for sending information down from -- to  
5 the -- to homes and a handicap in sending it up from  
6 homes to the rest of the world. I think there's an  
7 old expression about give a man a fish and he eats  
8 one day, teach him how to fish and they can feed  
9 themselves. Well, having the higher speeds to  
10 receive information tends to be movies and feel-good  
11 stuff but, if you try to make a living and you have  
12 to upload onto the Internet with the current  
13 numbers, you can't make a living. It's great for  
14 getting fish but not very good for fishing. Our --  
15 one of the -- from the recent newspaper articles and  
16 discussions this afternoon, one of the hopeful  
17 things that has come across, I think, from  
18 Mr. Porter is that the Department appears to be  
19 ready to recommend that the public dollars only be  
20 spent to -- to be spent to be focused on the areas  
21 where no one else will spend private dollars and to  
22 stop the practice of subsidizing companies to build  
23 out where it's reasonably expected that they would  
24 have built out anyway. Now, I may be exaggerating  
25 that, but this has been a great disappointment to

1 many of us to see that public dollars are being used  
2 to subsidize the profitable areas and then the  
3 owners are permitted to exercise monopolies and  
4 drive up prices.

5 So thank you. I hope we have some citizens  
6 from nearby who can add to that, embellish it,  
7 contradict it, or other.

8 THE MODERATOR: Well, while you're  
9 trying to decide if you're going to talk, Senator  
10 MacDonald brings up a really good point that I'll  
11 talk about just a minute. Several years back  
12 Vermont got more federal money per capita than any  
13 other state in the country, and, as Senator  
14 MacDonald rightly points out, we're still sitting in  
15 an area that really isn't served. And one of the  
16 things that the legislature's done and that we've  
17 been working on the last couple years is I think we  
18 probably are to the point where we are going to have  
19 to direct some public dollars into these projects,  
20 and one thing that's happened this past year is  
21 we've had the Department of Public Service, and  
22 we're regulators, and there are certainly things  
23 that regulators can do that no one else can do but,  
24 when it's a service that's not a regulated service,  
25 it's a little bit difficult at times. We've had a

1 Vermont telecommunications authority that would --  
2 that was created some years back that had bonding  
3 authority, and they were never able to use the  
4 bonding authority because you couldn't make a  
5 business case for the projects that they were trying  
6 to do. And so the -- what the legislature did this  
7 year is the VTA will become -- since I think we're  
8 going to have less certainly state dollars and I  
9 think we're going to want to be very targeted with  
10 how we spend it, is that we're trying to sort of  
11 consolidate all of the telecommunications efforts.  
12 And Senator MacDonald -- there's something that came  
13 up certainly earlier, but at the time, several years  
14 ago, ECFiber had a project they were trying to fund  
15 with the VTA, the Department had a project we were  
16 trying to do with the Public Service Board and  
17 FairPoint and, because we didn't know about the  
18 VTA/ECFiber project, we gave money to an area that  
19 we wouldn't have otherwise, and it created some  
20 problems, and I think there was a work-around. But  
21 I think to have it all centralized, and we  
22 ultimately work for the Governor, and the new  
23 division, what the VTA's going to become, will work  
24 for the Secretary of Administration, so I think it  
25 will be more centralized, which will be helpful for

1 what we're doing now. And, as we talked about  
2 earlier, and this is one of the thing we're revising  
3 the plan to be more specific about, is what we look  
4 at, in Vermont, in E911 addresses, we do broadband  
5 mapping. We're very lucky in Vermont; a lot of  
6 states can't use their E911 addresses. We update  
7 that information every six months, but we know that  
8 there's about 22 percent of the E911 addresses in  
9 Vermont, and we're sitting kind of in the middle of  
10 one of the big areas, where you really have very,  
11 very poor broadband speeds. Many people have  
12 768/200 at best. And so what we're hoping to do is  
13 take that segment, that 22 percent, and, through the  
14 connectivity fund, which was put into place by the  
15 legislature this past session, be able to target  
16 areas like the ones we're sitting in and, as we  
17 talked about, we hope that for once the people who  
18 have had the worst service for a long time will  
19 maybe be in the forefront and be able to get vastly  
20 better service than in other areas. So we hope that  
21 the plan, once we've revised it to make it a little  
22 more clear, we'll show that, and that's where we  
23 think we should target. And we'll be working with  
24 the legislature as we always do, because funding's  
25 going to be an issue, and that's the other thing

1 that we're in the process of having done now, which  
2 is try to come up with some idea of what this might  
3 cost. And it's -- to me it's a staggering expense,  
4 and we're basically using three cost models that we  
5 know about in Vermont, and we'll have  
6 recommendations as to what the cost would be to  
7 provide various services to areas in the state.

8 Irv?

9 IRV THOMAE: Um, Irv Thomae from  
10 Norwich, chairman of ECFiber. It seems I keep  
11 thinking of more things to say, so I'm glad you're  
12 having a series of hearings.

13 On the subject of the cost to do a major  
14 buildup -- buildout, I would like to draw the  
15 connection, the line between the dots, between the  
16 make-ready issue and the build-out cost.

17 THE MODERATOR: Okay.

18 IRV THOMAE As I've told you folks,  
19 correspondence with Clay, ECFiber presently  
20 estimates our cost to build a mile of cable and  
21 connect six customers at \$30,000. Let's take the  
22 customer connections out of that. The cost of  
23 building the cable infrastructure and the network  
24 infrastructure that it connects to is averaging out  
25 to 24,000 per mile. When we first started we were

1 saying 5,000 less than that, and a major reason  
2 we've had to increase it is that we find that make-  
3 ready, that's this process of getting the poles  
4 ready to -- to add our cable to the pole what was  
5 already there, make-ready is being delayed way  
6 beyond the standard time frame. And, if we've  
7 borrowed money and we're waiting to -- we can't get  
8 revenue to start paying that money back until we  
9 have connections to those cables on those poles,  
10 this dead time just spent waiting is time with no  
11 revenue, time with borrowing expense but without  
12 revenue. I would -- I would hazard a guess that the  
13 cost per mile, if we had efficient make-ready, if it  
14 always went by the standard PSB times of 60 days  
15 from application to quote and then 120 days from  
16 payment to completion, I would guess that we would  
17 be able to tell you that you could build that mile  
18 for 20 or 21 thousand per mile, not 26, 25, 24.  
19 That's -- you know, that mounts up when you're  
20 talking about hundreds and hundreds, a few thousands  
21 of miles.

22 THE MODERATOR: Right. Let me  
23 respond, really because I think you've got two  
24 things in there and just, if you all don't mind, I'm  
25 happy to do question and answer since earlier we had

1 more people who wanted to speak, but anywhere you  
2 see distribution lines, in Vermont anyone who's  
3 defined as a detaching entity, which would be a  
4 provider of sorts, they have a right to attach on  
5 those poles. And there's two things. One is the  
6 price that you pay, and there's a rather-complicated  
7 Public Service Board rule that imputes an amount of  
8 space based upon the type of attachee, we won't bore  
9 anybody with that, but then there's a tariffed rate  
10 for what the companies can charge people or entities  
11 to -- per pole to be there. And then the other  
12 piece of that is -- and it's like Irv was saying,  
13 ECFiber wants to do a project. let's say it involves  
14 a hundred poles, so they have to notify the pole  
15 owner that, you know, here's -- we need you to get  
16 the work done for us, this make-ready work. And the  
17 Board, the Public Service Board, has timelines in  
18 which the company has to do the make-ready work, and  
19 there's various -- there's other things --

20 IRV THOMAE: And if I may, let me give  
21 an example why this is necessary.

22 THE MODERATOR: Sure.

23 IRV THOMAE: For safety reasons, it  
24 has to be a little more than a yard, actually about  
25 a meter of space between the lowest power-carrying

1 line and the highest telecom line, because the  
2 telecom crews don't have the equipment to work  
3 safely next to the high voltage. And then the other  
4 cables on the pole are as high as they can be and  
5 have as much clearance as possible underneath when  
6 you've got a drive under, passing on a driveway or  
7 whatever.

8 CHARLES LARKIN: There's statutes on  
9 that, too.

10 IRV THOMAE: There are, indeed. So  
11 they typically put the cables up as high as they  
12 can. The newcomer, let's say it's ECFiber, comes  
13 along, we want to move our cable, the phone company  
14 wants to move their cable down to make room for us,  
15 and that's the make-ready work, moving the cable  
16 down. But sometimes the pole -- the pole wasn't  
17 tall enough to leave any more room to come down and  
18 still have the clearance underneath.

19 Is that an accurate --

20 THE MODERATOR: Yeah.

21 IRV THOMAE: Yeah. And then we have  
22 to pay for a new pole.

23 CHARLES LARKIN: Didn't that get  
24 modified? They used to have those so-called --  
25 well, first of all, the power company one went here,

1 one here and one here and the ground down below was  
2 about a three-foot span. When they were in trouble,  
3 they would put those little condensing unit --  
4 devices, condensing devices where they would hang  
5 onto the ground line and put the 3 A, B, and C phase  
6 below it and put the space. And the Board --

7 THE MODERATOR: The hinderance  
8 configuration.

9 CHARLES LARKIN: Hinderance, right.  
10 And the Board -- I had one, somebody stole it from  
11 me.

12 THE COURT: We're going to have to  
13 stop, because we're going to bore everybody.

14 CHARLES LARKIN: The Board made a rule  
15 they with weren't going to tell you how to build  
16 your pole on your company. You want to configure  
17 it, go ahead, but you were going to be assumed  
18 imputed to have built make-ready as cheap as  
19 possible for him. If they wanted to not -- if they  
20 wanted a bigger pole, go ahead, but he didn't pay  
21 for it, because they could have put the heaviest  
22 pole holder in and put in more.

23 THE MODERATOR: Right.

24 CHARLES LARKIN: So he no longer has  
25 to put a new pole in all the time.

1 THE MODERATOR: Right.

2 CHARLES LARKIN: Is that rule still  
3 in?

4 THE MODERATOR: I believe it is. When  
5 you talked about having to put in a new pole; that's  
6 a whole -- and that happens sometimes, but I  
7 think -- there's two things he's talking about. One  
8 is that the pole owner has sixty days to get it  
9 ready, and they don't.

10 IRV THOMAE: A hundred twenty.

11 THE MODERATOR: Or a hundred twenty?

12 IRV THOMAE: We pay them to have 120  
13 days.

14 THE MODERATOR: And it's different per  
15 how many poles are involved. Aren't there two or  
16 three categories right now?

17 IRV THOMAE: I don't -- I'm aware of  
18 that.

19 THE MODERATOR: Okay.

20 IRV THOMAE: But I know that 120  
21 days -- last year we had some when they should have  
22 gotten the work done in October and they didn't get  
23 it done until this April.

24 THE MODERATOR: Right. And the remedy  
25 for Irv or whoever else is to file a petition with

1 the Public Service Board and say, You know, the pole  
2 owners aren't doing right, fix it. And I think what  
3 we've been trying to do, just simply because it's  
4 faster, is I think, and since you all have contacted  
5 the Department, and we've contacted the pole owner  
6 and said, We're going to have a board proceeding,  
7 which nobody wants, get this fixed. There's a  
8 couple things. At one time Sovernet had a massive  
9 project.

10 IRV THOMAE: Yeah.

11 THE MODERATOR: And that sort of  
12 backed up some of it, and then we've had some storms  
13 that have been problematic. And, quite frankly, and  
14 Charlie will appreciate this, I think one of the --  
15 the largest pole owner, just quite simply, doesn't  
16 have enough staff.

17 CHARLES LARKIN: What's that?

18 THE MODERATOR: I think the largest  
19 pole owner doesn't have enough staff.

20 CHARLES LARKIN: Fire him.

21 THE MODERATOR: And that's something  
22 that we could revisit, I think we would have to do  
23 it in the context of a board rule. It's something  
24 we've been talking about the for the last year is  
25 trying to address the rate.

1                   IRV THOMAE: Wasn't the board supposed  
2 to have convened a meeting of interested parties a  
3 couple years ago and never did?

4                   THE MODERATOR: Well, what they were  
5 supposed -- what was supposed to have been done is,  
6 if there's a large project, a very large project, as  
7 the Sovernet project was, the legislature  
8 mandated -- those projects are not covered by the  
9 board rule, it's between a contract with the company  
10 and the pole owner, and if it's more than 7 percent  
11 of the poles or something. And there was no --  
12 there were no time frames involved, and so the  
13 legislature mandated that the Board come up with  
14 what they call -- I think we called it a rapid  
15 response program, and it was for big projects. To  
16 the best of my knowledge, it never got put into  
17 place. We did have one complaint that came under  
18 the big project, rapid response, and we initiated an  
19 action, and the Board treated it as though it were  
20 in place, and it was resolved. But, no, you're  
21 correct, that never happened. And that large  
22 project is now built out, but it was -- what you're  
23 talking about was applicable to the large projects.

24                   IRV THOMAE: Right, right, yeah.  
25 Well, I just wanted to add that.

1                   THE MODERATOR: No, and I think that's  
2 help-- I think another thing we would need to look  
3 at is what we call, you know, some people it's  
4 imputed that you pay if you're using 2 feet of space  
5 and some people it's 1 foot, and we would like to go  
6 to a lower, unified rate where everyone pays at the  
7 same rate, and that's another piece.

8                   MARK MacDONALD: In the case that Irv  
9 outlined where work was supposed to be done by a  
10 certain date, and it was six months late, it being  
11 completed, ECFiber borrowed money expecting to go up  
12 on the pole a certain date, and now who pays the  
13 interest on the borrowed money for the six months  
14 that -- who picks -- who is obliged to pick up the  
15 tab for that?

16                   THE MODERATOR: Well, that's the  
17 problem, nobody, and that's -- and that's kind of  
18 the problem --

19                   IRV THOMAE: ECFiber does.

20                   THE MODERATOR: ECFiber does, right.

21                   MARK MacDONALD: But the agreement was  
22 it would be up in 120 days. When ECFiber gets that  
23 agreement, they go out and borrow money, and then  
24 their competitor is permitted to go six months  
25 longer, while ECFiber is -- has obliged to pay the

1 interest on the money they borrowed. Isn't that  
2 sort of like putting your thumb on the scale when  
3 you're selling meat or something?

4 THE MODERATOR: Well, sure it is,  
5 and -- to some extent. And the built-in problem is,  
6 if you go to the Public Service Board, it's  
7 essentially like suing somebody or going to court,  
8 and that is not a speedy process, and so that's why  
9 we tried to deal with it, as we said earlier, more  
10 informally, but it's something that, I think,  
11 warrants looking at the current rules and how they  
12 work, along with the rates, and I think that's a  
13 good --

14 IRV THOMAE: There are no incentive --

15 THE MODERATOR: Correct.

16 IRV THOMAE: There are disincentives  
17 to cooperation on the part of the people on the  
18 poles already.

19 THE MODERATOR: Correct. Correct. I  
20 wouldn't disagree with you.

21 IRV THOMAE: And it's probably only a  
22 coincidence, it's probably nothing deliberate, that  
23 during those many months the company that hadn't  
24 gotten around to moving its cable announced DSL  
25 service in several of these areas that ECFiber was

1 being delayed in getting to. Yes, purely a  
2 coincidence. But I did want to bring that up.

3 THE MODERATOR: No, it's a point well  
4 taken, and it is something that I think we need to  
5 do.

6 IRV THOMAE: But my broader point is,  
7 if that problem is addressed, then the cost for an  
8 ambitious build-out of a large area goes down, and  
9 that's a significant saving to everybody.

10 THE MODERATOR: I gotcha, I gotcha.  
11 That's a good point.

12 MARK MacDONALD: If we were to say,  
13 Well, that's too bad, ECFiber, you've got to pay the  
14 money if you want to play; but, if Irv is correct,  
15 the public who was expecting to get some service  
16 that might end up being in dark fiber has now got  
17 broadband, so not only has ECFiber is loss but the  
18 public has gotten a more obsolete --

19 IRV THOMAE: Has a lesser grade.

20 MARK MacDONALD: -- less-worthy  
21 service.

22 THE MODERATOR: I'll tell you an  
23 interesting phenomenon that's happened. In the  
24 instance of the telephone company, who's the large  
25 pole owner, we've recently had a huge number of

1 complaints, and we have threatened to go have an  
2 investigation with the Public Service Board because  
3 it's unacceptable. And so they come in, and I'm  
4 making these numbers up, but they have three  
5 thousand complaints about telephone service and  
6 three thousand complaints about broadband service.  
7 I can regulate their response time for the telephone  
8 service, and I can't for the broadband. And so, you  
9 know, one of the things they were saying for a long  
10 time is, We're first dealing with the telephone  
11 service issues, but -- when we had these massive  
12 calls in, because you're charging us, you know,  
13 fines and stuff. Well, we sort of relieved them of  
14 the fines, but it's a problem, and it's my belief,  
15 and I guess we'll see over the next few months, that  
16 a lot of the problem is just staffing, but they do  
17 not have the appropriate number of people to do the  
18 work they have to do sometimes.

19 IRV THOMAE: Does federal law force  
20 Vermont to refrain from regulating; could Vermont  
21 attempt to regulate information services even though  
22 the FCC doesn't?

23 THE MODERATOR: I think -- when you  
24 say reg--

25 IRV THOMAE: I think we all need to

1 understand that, the public, we all need to  
2 understand the constraints that you operate within.

3 THE MODERATOR: Let's talk about that  
4 a little bit. With telecom regulation, it's always  
5 been the states get to regulate what the federal  
6 government says they can regulate. And telephone  
7 service, as we know, they're no longer monopolies;  
8 the largest company is financially struggling, to  
9 put it politely. And at this point, even though I  
10 say that you're receiving the same service, although  
11 it may be over broadband, but it's what I call a  
12 telephone service, it's been deemed an information  
13 service, and so the State doesn't have jurisdiction  
14 over that like it does telephone service. So twenty  
15 years ago, if we were talking about phone service or  
16 if we were talking about service quality, you'd just  
17 go to the Public Service Board and you order the  
18 company to do it; and what they did was, you know,  
19 they had a monopoly and, when they invested in  
20 infrastructure, they were recovered it in rates. We  
21 no longer rate regulate the telephone companies, and  
22 we just don't have -- I can't tell you to go build  
23 out fiber or and I can't tell FairPoint to build out  
24 fiber, but we can tell them to do something with  
25 their phone service. So it's a -- it's a -- and

1 there's a proceeding at the FCC now, you've heard  
2 about neutrality, I'm sure, and this is part of it,  
3 but the FCC is looking at how to classify broadband  
4 Internet service, and we've actually filed comments  
5 within the last week, us and the Public Service  
6 Board, asking the FCC be classified as a Title II or  
7 telecommunication service. Not positive that's  
8 going to happen, but we'll see.

9 IRV THOMAE: But it's good to hear  
10 that you and the PSB for Vermont have weighed in on  
11 that question with the FCC.

12 THE MODERATOR: Well, we did, and  
13 we're a part of the National Regulatory Association,  
14 so three times a year all of the regulators in the  
15 country get together. Those are exciting meetings,  
16 you can manage. But at all these meetings we meet  
17 with FCC staff; and, particularly for a rural state,  
18 it's really kind of scary, that that's regulator  
19 speak, I guess, but it's a very difficult  
20 environment, and we're going to have to have some  
21 federal guidance, I think, one way or the other.

22 IRV THOMAE: Are you in a small  
23 minority among the states when you ask the FCC to  
24 consider regulating information services?

25 THE MODERATOR: There are a lot of

1 people who would like to see it be a Title II  
2 service.

3 IRV THOMAE: Good.

4 THE MODERATOR: There are also very  
5 big and powerful companies who would not like to see  
6 it be a Title II service.

7 IRV THOMAE: Right. I don't mean to  
8 take up so much time.

9 GUS SPETH: My name is Gus Speth,  
10 S-p-e-t-h, and I live at 89 Jordan Road in  
11 Strafford, at the end of Jordan Road, the very end  
12 of Jordan Road.

13 As I understand it, I'm supposed to have  
14 4/1 service now; is that right?

15 THE MODERATOR: I don't know. I would  
16 have to look at your address.

17 GUS SPETH: Really? I thought it was  
18 everybody, ubiquitous.

19 THE MODERATOR: No, no, no, no, no.  
20 Ubiquitous, let me talk about that.

21 GUS SPETH: Well, tell me when I'm  
22 going to have at least 4/1 service.

23 THE MODERATOR: Okay. Under the  
24 federal grants that were funded several years ago,  
25 all of which have not been built out, they were all

1 funded at a stage of 768/200. Now, currently every  
2 address in Vermont either has that minimum speed or  
3 they have a funded solution in place. Now, in all  
4 fairness, the vast majority of the people that have  
5 the funded solution in place is to come from a VTel  
6 wireless broadband project. That project, which is  
7 terribly behind --

8 GUS SPETH: It is coming to Strafford?

9 THE MODERATOR: You know, I -- our  
10 map -- we have a map, GIS map. I honestly don't  
11 know. Our mapping person's not with us tonight.  
12 I'm sorry.

13 CLAY PURVIS: I do believe it is,  
14 but --

15 THE MODERATOR: Okay. It's covering  
16 44,000 addresses, 97 percent. It's -- if you don't  
17 have it, it's likely, and we can look at your  
18 address tomorrow and tell you.

19 GUS SPETH: Only service we have  
20 access to is a wave pump at 2 vps.

21 THE MODERATOR: I'm going to guess  
22 you're in the VTel Wilder territory, depending on  
23 where you are, once it gets built. I believe it's  
24 providing very high speeds, but --

25 GUS SPETH: Any guarantees?

1 CHARLES LARKIN: No.

2 THE MODERATOR: Well, the problem with  
3 that, here we get with federal and state again.  
4 That's a federally-funded project that,  
5 unfortunately, we have no oversight over. We  
6 actually talk with the federal agencies that funded  
7 that project every two weeks to try to check on  
8 progress, but that's really just being loud.

9 GUS SPETH: What's your best guess as  
10 to when VTel is going to be able to provide me  
11 service?

12 THE MODERATOR: Well, as of I think  
13 last week, they tell us they still believe the  
14 project will be completed by June 2015. As you may  
15 know, what happened is, originally, under their  
16 federal grant, they had to finish it by the end of  
17 2013, and then the people who gave them the money  
18 said, No, you don't have to do it by 2013, and they  
19 bumped it out to 2015, so that is the -- that is  
20 what they tell us and what their current terms of  
21 their grants say.

22 GUS SPETH: Thank you.

23 STEVE WHITAKER: I'd like to speak for  
24 a few minutes.

25 CHARLES LARKIN: I have something to

1 say.

2 STEVE WHITAKER: Oh, you want to go  
3 first?

4 CHARLES LARKIN: Charlie Larkin,  
5 citizen of Vermont, former telecom engineer for the  
6 Department of Public Service for thirty-plus years.

7 Thinking about all the talking you've done  
8 and all the meetings you've had so far, I think that  
9 cell towers, to a degree, have not been struck too  
10 often at these hearings. And I remember some of the  
11 language, it was and along the roads, the  
12 phraseology in there. I wonder if you have an  
13 evaluation or you would consider evaluating and  
14 putting into your revision of this plan something  
15 about those mini towers, mini cell towers. I use  
16 the word "towers" that aren't, really units that  
17 hook up on the telephone pole.

18 THE MODERATOR: Small cell.

19 CHARLES LARKIN: I would like to  
20 strongly suggest that some kind of looking at what  
21 they could do and what roads could be serviced and  
22 how far they could spread the word out without  
23 trying to build these big towers, because of your  
24 NIMBY problem, even if you were to bless things. As  
25 you attested, you've got the experience in saying

1 go, go, go and the next day a phone call said, no,  
2 we don't want it. You could avoid some of those  
3 fights by putting some of these on the poles, I  
4 think.

5 THE MODERATOR: To that question, the  
6 VTA has funded -- I'm not sure they call it a pilot,  
7 but they have funded the use of the small-cell  
8 technology in along some corridors, and I believe  
9 that we were the first place in the country to  
10 actually try that type of technology. There might  
11 have been an Indian reservation out west that did  
12 it. It's not tested, and there are some  
13 technological issues with it now. I can tell you  
14 that the bigger companies are now starting to  
15 install the small cell, but they will not use them  
16 as a -- they're very low powered, and they -- they  
17 have to be within line of sight of the next pole,  
18 and they have a very little ability to -- they have  
19 a very, you know, narrow margin where they can  
20 provide service.

21 CHARLES LARKIN: They're down the  
22 road.

23 THE MODERATOR: Right. The larger  
24 companies are starting to use them, and we'll see, I  
25 think the reason it's not mentioned more is I don't

1 think it's a substitute for what we think of as cell  
2 towers, although I have to say, in Vermont we have  
3 more cell towers on silos and inside church steeples  
4 than I think anybody else in the country, so that's  
5 a lot of cell towers, too, but I don't think right  
6 now they're a substitute for the larger cell towers.  
7 Although the bigger companies are starting to us  
8 them in Vermont.

9 CHARLES LARKIN: Builder companies  
10 meaning?

11 THE MODERATOR: AT&T and Verizon.

12 LEE VORMELKER: Lee Vormelker, I live  
13 at 12 Tyson Road here in Strafford.

14 I just wanted to comment on the mini cell  
15 towers. I believe that technology only provides  
16 voice service, so at the moment it would provide no  
17 capability for broadband. Is that right?

18 IRV THOMAE: I've heard people say  
19 nice things about its voice support.

20 LEE VORMELKER: The voice does work.

21 THE MODERATOR: I've tried to do the  
22 broadband, because I had one broadband provider who  
23 would not provide this company backhaul because they  
24 thought they were going to try to compete with them  
25 for a broadband -- wireless broadband product.

1           And the problem with the voice, even, is,  
2 to date, if you go put up a hundred of them and call  
3 yourself a rural carrier, they cannot seamlessly  
4 interact with your telephone provider. In other  
5 words, if you were driving and you had your Verizon  
6 phone, you're going to lose the call or you'll lose  
7 the signal, it will pick it back up, and you'll have  
8 these during the period of time that you're there,  
9 and then the -- and the big companies are hesitant  
10 to use it when it's someone else providing it,  
11 because they don't want their customers calling them  
12 and saying, Why do I always get dropped -- you know  
13 what I'm saying, why do I -- and they are starting  
14 to use them a little bit now.

15           LEE VORMELKER: It's an interim  
16 technology --

17           THE MODERATOR: Right.

18           LEE VORMELKER: And in locations in  
19 Vermont where there is no cell coverage, Strafford  
20 being one of them, it's -- it allows us to come from  
21 the 19th century to somewhere into the 20th century.

22           THE MODERATOR: Right.

23           LEE VORMELKER: But it does not get us  
24 to the 21st century.

25           THE MODERATOR: No, I agree with you.

1 The ones we're using, I think it's -- is it Sprint?  
2 Sprint's -- it's Sprint's Technology, and Sprint's  
3 roaming with them. The problem is we're putting  
4 these things out in Orange County that run with  
5 Sprint, but all the Sprint customers are in  
6 Burlington, so -- or New York.

7 CLAY PURVIS: Not even Burlington. I  
8 think Boston's probably the closest Sprint.

9 THE MODERATOR: Which is one of the  
10 reasons we haven't written extensively about them, I  
11 because I don't know that we'll see them. At this  
12 point I want to -- we'd like to see how the VTA  
13 project shakes out and see how successful that is.

14 LEE VORMELKER: It appears to be a  
15 technology that does help for motorists who have  
16 9-1-1 kind of calls.

17 THE MODERATOR: Right, right, right.

18 LEE VORMELKER: That will work very  
19 well, but today's world of trying to yelp or do  
20 mapping or anything where you want to use your  
21 smartphone doesn't happen.

22 THE MODERATOR: Right. That's a good  
23 point.

24 MARK MacDONALD: Have you developed an  
25 opinion on citizens of this county on the following

1 question: Given a choice between the Department  
2 going full bore on broadband or full bore on cell  
3 phone service, what do you think that the citizens  
4 of this county would prefer that you do?

5 THE MODERATOR: What was -- would you  
6 say the last part one more time.

7 MARK MacDONALD: If you were to ask  
8 the citizens of this county, from what you've  
9 learned so far, If you had to choose between putting  
10 resources behind broadband to all homes or telephone  
11 cell service on all highways, what is the message  
12 that you will receive from the citizens of this  
13 county?

14 THE MODERATOR: Certainly from the  
15 hearings, broadband, but with some previous  
16 experiences, um, I came to Vershire one day, and I  
17 think some of you may have been there and --

18 (unidentified speaker): Vershire.

19 THE MODERATOR: I have a southern  
20 Vermont accent, and I don't say some things like I'm  
21 supposed to. And I believe I was yelled at by --  
22 was it 150? How many people were there, Senator?

23 MARK MacDONALD: A healthy number for  
24 Vershire.

25 THE MODERATOR: It went on so long --

1 this was on a Saturday. My wife believed that it  
2 couldn't have taken this long, so she knew I was  
3 dead because I wasn't answering my cell phone. And,  
4 when I got to Montpelier, I said, Well, the problem  
5 is, once you got past Barre, there was no cell  
6 service, you know, for those hours. And so what our  
7 opinion is, and what's in the plan, is that we need  
8 both. But, let me say this, the broadband, I think,  
9 is -- and if my 18-year-old daughter were sitting  
10 here, she might disagree with me because she's never  
11 without her iPhone, I think the broadband is the  
12 first and most-important component, and it's  
13 something I actually think we can do something  
14 about. Within the last two months -- once or twice  
15 a year we get the Verizon and AT&T high-up people to  
16 come to meet with us, and, you know, we talk to them  
17 every year, and we say, You know, what if we put in  
18 a tax and we gave you the money to build cell  
19 towers? And they said, We wouldn't take it. And so  
20 the broadband, I think, is something we can actually  
21 do something about. I do think with the cell  
22 towers, with the 248a, which is a relaxed permitting  
23 statute, particularly for the small cell facilities.  
24 You know, we've had over 300, I think, applications  
25 for permits in the last couple of years, so that's

1 been very successful.

2 MARK MacDONALD: Well, I would suggest  
3 that the national companies are eager to have cell  
4 towers, because that's in their interests, and it's  
5 the citizens of this county who have become  
6 accustomed to the phone services they have.

7 THE MODERATOR: Right.

8 MARK MacDONALD: Many of us, you know,  
9 didn't get phones until -- well, anyway, the  
10 citizens of this county feel that their economic  
11 interests and the county's future is much more  
12 dependent on broadband service than the -- than the  
13 cell phones which seem to be a priority of the --  
14 the for-profit companies that want to do that.

15 THE MODERATOR: Right.

16 MARK MacDONALD: That's my opinion.

17 THE MODERATOR: No, it's broadband.

18 MARK MacDONALD: If you could verify  
19 that but dispute and act accordingly after you  
20 verify.

21 THE MODERATOR: Oh, no, you're exactly  
22 right, and it's all broadband, broadband, broadband.  
23 What we call the cell phones, they're moving toward  
24 your making -- your telephone calls are going to be  
25 made over the Internet anyways, so it's a little bit

1 of a misnomer to call them cell phones at some  
2 point. It's all about profit.

3 MARK MacDONALD: Will you take that  
4 message back that, if you had to focus on one, focus  
5 on broadband and --

6 THE MODERATOR: Oh, absolutely,  
7 absolutely.

8 MARK MacDONALD: Okay.

9 THOMAS ESSEX: So, excuse me, yes.  
10 Tom Essex, South Strafford, 165 Mine Road, two and a  
11 half miles from here, up the hill. I passed you  
12 coming down, stopping at the store, looking  
13 bewildered because

14 THE MODERATOR: I was bewildered.

15 THOMAS ESSEX: -- you didn't know  
16 where you were.

17 THE MODERATOR: Because my GPS  
18 wouldn't work. I couldn't get here.

19 THOMAS ESSEX: Okay. That's okay.  
20 That's okay. I have had FairPoint, previously  
21 Verizon DSL since 2009. Very slow, it was recently  
22 upgraded to I believe it's 3 megs, which I'm told is  
23 pretty good for around here.

24 I haven't read the full report. I've heard  
25 a lot of stuff. Two things concern me is (1) the

1 cost, very expensive. I heard billion dollars  
2 quoted for the entire state, a lot of money. Other  
3 thing is the economic imperative that seems to be  
4 driving it, and the expected business benefits and  
5 the commercial benefits and the infrastructure  
6 improvements and the job improvements and all the  
7 economic stuff that comes with it. I've heard the  
8 senator, I've heard a lot of people talk about, Oh,  
9 we're going to improve our education, it'll lower  
10 our property taxes because we're going to be able to  
11 have broadband classes, we're going to have  
12 children, we could have one student here, one  
13 student here, we can all have the same teacher, and  
14 they can all do this because now we have fast fiber  
15 optic connections. I've heard other people say  
16 that, Well, we can have lot's of people work in  
17 their houses and they can work at home, they could  
18 get this fast upgrade, and they're going to make  
19 lots of money and improve our economic situation.  
20 But I'm going to come back to that billion dollars  
21 again. I have a daughter here in school. They do  
22 have fast connections at the new school, actually  
23 she's not here anymore. She's moved on. She was  
24 going to take an advanced algebra class. She did  
25 not pass it. She did not do it, because she had to

1 sit in front of a computer with no help, nobody  
2 talking to her, nobody giving her any assistance  
3 other than she could do something on a computer with  
4 somebody, who she didn't know, she didn't even know  
5 where she was. So, you know, it's a good idea, but  
6 it's not going to work for everybody, and it's not  
7 really going to be the save all.

8           The economic incentive, my wife is a CPA.  
9 She works in an office 25 miles from here. She  
10 could work from home; they have the capability on  
11 her computer, and she does occasionally do whatever  
12 the SSLo sign-in crazy stuff is, which means nobody  
13 else in our house can work because, if anybody else  
14 tries to do anything on the computer, she gets mad  
15 because it doesn't work anymore. But she probably  
16 wouldn't work from home very much anyway, because it  
17 takes a very, very -- I don't know what the word is,  
18 but the individual who will sit in front of their  
19 computer at their home by themselves, not seeing other  
20 people, all day long, it takes a very strong  
21 individual to do that, and I reckon that the number  
22 of people that can do that is very small. So the  
23 economic benefits are not all their cracked up to  
24 be, in my mind.

25           THE MODERATOR: Well, and let's talk

1 about --

2 THOMAS ESSEX: Not that I don't want  
3 them to happen, not that I don't want them to  
4 happen, because, you know, I'd like to see fast  
5 Internet, but, you know, I'm told that I've got to  
6 pony up half a dozen people to come up with twelve  
7 hundred or whatever the current buy-in rate is for  
8 ECFiber to build a line to get ten people on our  
9 road, maybe we'll get a line up there. But, for the  
10 moment, I think what we've got is sufficient.

11 THE MODERATOR: Well, and I think  
12 that's a lot of the balance. When we talk about  
13 this billion dollars, let me just let you know,  
14 we're in the process of having a company do some  
15 modeling for us and, when we talk about doing all  
16 the addresses in the state, one model's going to  
17 show about a billion, one's probably going to -- Irv  
18 may dispute me -- it's going to be somewhat less  
19 than that. But today in the state we've got about  
20 seventy percent of the addresses outside, not  
21 population, who have either fiber to the home or  
22 they have broadband available through cable service,  
23 which has very high speeds. So what we're -- what  
24 I'm looking at, I think, as a first priority in this  
25 is for the places that really -- you said you got

1 bumped up to the three service with FairPoint?

2 THOMAS ESSEX: Yeah.

3 THE MODERATOR: There's a lot of  
4 people, I know because they're the other group we  
5 hear from at some of the other public hearings we've  
6 had, who are in the other areas and they really have  
7 very slow service, 768/200, which doesn't allow you  
8 to do some things. I mean, you can't apply for a  
9 job with the State of Vermont; you'd have to do it  
10 on-line. And I agree with you, I think there's a  
11 balancing as to what we're going to -- you know,  
12 when a company pays for it when they have customers,  
13 great, but I do think we have to look at what we're  
14 willing to pay for, and I think that's important,  
15 and I think that's why we've targeted the people who  
16 really would love to have what you have today.

17 THOMAS ESSEX: Okay. Well, I don't  
18 feel -- I don't feel blessed, but I appreciate it.

19 The other thing that I would just like to  
20 point out about all this commercial stuff is Vermont  
21 is already a high-expense business climate, and  
22 spending more state money to improve the services,  
23 it's like putting in the sewer and saying you're  
24 going to put in the big dairy plant out at end of  
25 the sewer line because now the sewer is there but

1 the rest of the economy is crumbling, the cows have  
2 all moved off, you know, and now there's no dairy  
3 industry to put in there so you don't need the  
4 sewer, so, you know, let's integrate that with  
5 everything else and not get lost just because it's  
6 the latest, greatest new stuff that we should be  
7 spending our money for that, and let's certainly not  
8 raise the taxes. I don't want to pay any more  
9 taxes, because they're way too high.

10 THE MODERATOR: Well, I think I've  
11 been criticized a little for the past month for  
12 maybe not being a little more aggressive and wanting  
13 to spend money, so.

14 THOMAS ESSEX: Well, that's my  
15 concern.

16 THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

17 MARK MacDONALD: Somewhat reminiscent  
18 of the argument of why Vermonters couldn't get  
19 electricity, because it was a poor state, it was too  
20 expensive.

21 THE MODERATOR: Poor state, and when  
22 you've got -- well, and when you talk about rural  
23 electrification and all that, I told you this  
24 earlier and I'll tell you. We used to -- there's  
25 something called a Universal Service Fund. We've

1 all paid into it for the last thirty years, and it's  
2 a federal tax. I'm probably supposed to say "user  
3 fee" but it's a user tax, but what it's been used  
4 for is for the companies to provide telephone  
5 service in the rural areas. So what the FCC has  
6 done is they're redirecting that money away from  
7 voice service and they're putting it to broadband,  
8 and one of the purposes of all this was so the rural  
9 areas would have parity with the urban areas with  
10 regard to their broadband speeds, and what they  
11 currently set it at is a speed of 4/1. And so, you  
12 know, we've got some -- whereas with rural  
13 electrification you've got electricity, and what  
14 we're talking about now is a service but there's  
15 various speeds within that service and what's  
16 actually the appropriate service that should be  
17 funded.

18 IRV THOMAE: You know, I'd like to  
19 point out that rural electrification did not tell  
20 the farmers, Oh, yeah, you're going to get  
21 electricity, but we're only going to give you 37  
22 volts.

23 THE MODERATOR: Well, right, right.

24 IRV THOMAE: And so far the nation,  
25 I'm not saying the state, I'm saying the nation has

1 shrunk from giving anything like true parity to  
2 rural areas.

3 THE MODERATOR: You've said exactly --  
4 and what I would tell you is that the FCC today has  
5 said we're going to give you 37 volts, Irv.

6 IRV THOMAE: Right.

7 THE MODERATOR: I agree with you.

8 CHUCK SHERMAN: We were talking about  
9 4 megabits per second broadband. FCC chairman Tom  
10 Wheeler today said 4 megabits is too slow to be  
11 considered broadband --

12 THE MODERATOR: Yup.

13 CHUCK SHERMAN: -- and that Internet  
14 service providers who accept government subsidies  
15 should offer at least 10 megabits per second. So  
16 the only service around here that offers that,  
17 provides, is fiber to the home. Spending any  
18 resources on anything else in the meantime, to me,  
19 seems like a waste of money.

20 My name is Chuck Sherman. I testified  
21 earlier.

22 CLAY PURVIS: Correct me if I'm wrong,  
23 but I believe his comments was 10/1, and I believe  
24 the cell can do 10/1

25 IRV THOMAE: It can do 10/1 if you

1 have the good luck to be right next to the remote  
2 terminal in your neighborhood.

3 THE MODERATOR: And there's -- and  
4 there's some -- there's a fund, a federal fund  
5 called the "Connect America Fund 2," and it's going  
6 to be available the end of this year and the rules  
7 will be written, and the FCC has made some noise  
8 that they will change the speed, the minimum speed,  
9 for funding, from 4/1 to 10/1 of that speed, and,  
10 you know, I'm not sure, if you're going to spend a  
11 state dollar, that that's what you would necessarily  
12 want to fund. The problem is that's what the feds  
13 are funding in certain areas and, as I said,  
14 earlier, once this -- when the FCC order came out in  
15 November of 2011, there were so many lawsuits they  
16 had to consolidate them into different federal  
17 courts, and both we and the Public Service Board  
18 provided various comments saying that it was under-  
19 funded and would not bring the rural areas to speed,  
20 these parity speeds. Virtually every challenge to  
21 the -- what we call the transformation order is  
22 lost. And Tom Wheeler also said -- I read this  
23 week -- that he's really going to look at whether  
24 Internet service should be a Title 2 service, and so  
25 I hope that's true.

1                   THOMAS ESSEX: I hope Tom Wheeler will  
2 get a grandchild, because you may recall from my  
3 previous testimony the benefit of the broadband  
4 symmetry is that, when you're doing communications  
5 with someone, like your grandchild, it's both  
6 directions you need that speed, for video, for  
7 Facetime. So maybe when Tom Wheeler gets a  
8 grandkid, you know, he'll up it.

9                   THE MODERATOR: Well, he's got that  
10 speed in Washington anyways. So right.

11                  THOMAS ESSEX: We could Skype from  
12 ours, very easily.

13                  THE MODERATOR: With your 3?

14                  THOMAS ESSEX: Yes. Not very fast,  
15 but yes.

16                  THE MODERATOR: It's funny, the other  
17 guy who works with us, he sits there watching  
18 Netflix of 768/200.

19                  CLAY PURVIS: He is.

20                  STEVE WHITAKER: I think that much of  
21 this discussion is passé in that this statute now  
22 has a goal of symmetric, 100 megabit by 2024, and  
23 there is also a requirement that we not waste money  
24 on short-lived technology that will soon become  
25 obsolete. So much of this discussion about 4/1 and

1 10/1 does not belong in the plan. I mean, it's --

2 MARK MacDONALD: Right.

3 STEVE WHITAKER: -- it's really a  
4 distraction.

5 Now, I would like to correct a few of the  
6 comments I heard earlier about that pole attachment  
7 proceeding, and that was Act 53 of 2011, which  
8 actually required the Public Service Board, by rule,  
9 to conduct a proceeding and effectuate a revised  
10 rule to implement an accelerated pole attachment  
11 dispute resolution process, no matter whether it's  
12 small companies or big companies. It was  
13 across-the-board rule making. And the Board didn't  
14 do it and the Department didn't lean on them to do  
15 it. Okay, those are two serious failings of a  
16 legislated mandate, and that's what we count on the  
17 Department to do, is to advocate for the public and  
18 indirectly for the ECFibers, and it didn't happen,  
19 and y'all had the bully pulpit as the Department to  
20 insist the Board do that. They had the mandate to  
21 do it. So I want the record to be clear on that.  
22 The fact that it sunset this last July and that  
23 testimony before the committee did not ask that to  
24 be extended and renewed such that that proceeding,  
25 by rule, would happen is another oversight or

1 negligent, in my opinion. One of many.

2           Secondly, the -- the -- there was much  
3 discussion at the earlier hearing today about how  
4 valuable the Orange County fiber connect project and  
5 some of the others are. Now, I want to extend that  
6 concept further, because, even though the Public  
7 Service Department and Board cannot regulate  
8 information services, we clearly have the authority  
9 in state law to regulate our right-of-way. And  
10 these companies are using our public right-of-way,  
11 and many of the fibers are dark; Comcast has dark  
12 fiber right across the state, FairPoint has dark  
13 fiber across the state, many, many miles of dark  
14 fiber, which can be regulated if we have an  
15 aggressive public advocate petitioning the Board for  
16 investigation and examining where that is.

17           Now, I received a response last night from  
18 your -- from Clay, to my public records request for  
19 all records and responses from the utilities,  
20 pursued under the 202.d authority you have, to  
21 require infrastructure information from the  
22 utilities. You've admitted in prior settings that  
23 you don't know where the fiber is. You have the  
24 statutory authority to demand to know where that  
25 fiber is, and you didn't do it. So this whole

1 process is somewhat of a waste because we still  
2 don't know where the fiber is, so we can't put an  
3 accurate number on how many miles of fiber need to  
4 be built. We need to establish clear open access,  
5 again a 202.c goal, set by the legislature, to the  
6 dark fiber. There's no way that Comcast can claim  
7 that they're unregulatable when they're -- that  
8 fiber's not even lit. There's no information  
9 services running over it. It's a piece of  
10 infrastructure sitting in the public right-of-way,  
11 and it's accessible for open access, and it can be a  
12 condition of their CPG. So I'm imploring upon you  
13 to get serious and -- about advocating for what we  
14 already have the authority to do. I'm hearing so  
15 many reasons why we can't do it, and I've grown  
16 weary of it, if you can hear that in my tone.

17           Yeah, the fact that I learned yesterday  
18 that you'd never even asked the companies where  
19 their infrastructure is, in the course of preparing  
20 the plan, basically makes this process premature.  
21 That until you've done your assessment of state  
22 networks, of state infrastructure, and where the  
23 fiber is and where the DSL is, you don't have the  
24 preliminaries in place to draft a plan upon which we  
25 can provide meaningful comment.

1           So thank you for your time. Sorry it's not  
2 sweeter.

3           THE MODERATOR: Thank you. Anybody  
4 else? Questions?

5           THOMAS ESSEX: I have one question,  
6 about the -- is it VANU, is that the micro cell?

7           THE MODERATOR: Um-hum.

8           THOMAS ESSEX: Do they -- they're on  
9 poles, but they have to have a backhaul to their  
10 systems, so --

11          THE MODERATOR: Yeah.

12          THOMAS ESSEX: Do they work on poles  
13 that have copper or poles that have fiber?

14          THE MODERATOR: They prefer to have  
15 fiber if they can get it. I believe they're using a  
16 good bit of DSL.

17          THOMAS ESSEX: So as you build out the  
18 county connectors, you're helping them expand cell  
19 service?

20          IRV THOMAE: I believe that the mini  
21 antennas, for example on Route 113 in Vershire and  
22 North Fairlee, I believe they are being fed from  
23 OCFC fiber, and I'm certain that the CoverageCo  
24 projects in south central Vermont, that the VTA has  
25 brought on-line, some of which are active, some

1 which are about to become active, I know that those  
2 are fed from wherever possible, dark fiber, and VTA  
3 is planning a major extension of dark fiber to  
4 support tourist corridors.

5 THOMAS ESSEX: I hope they work more  
6 than tourist corridors, that they work for anyone  
7 that connectors are coming through Strafford. We're  
8 not really a tourist corridor.

9 IRV THOMAE: Well, I don't know if  
10 CoverageCo plans to put those antennae along Route  
11 132 following the OCFC. You could ask the VTA about  
12 that. And that's the beauty of the dark fiber  
13 trunks 144 fibers in there, and different entities  
14 can lease subsets of that fiber, long-term leases.

15 THOMAS ESSEX: That's still investment  
16 in Orange County -- other county connectors has a  
17 dual payoff.

18 THE MODERATOR: If the CoverageCo  
19 project does what it should do, perhaps.

20 CLAY PURVIS: Would anybody else like  
21 to speak?

22 THE MODERATOR: Thank you all for  
23 coming. Good to see you.

24 (The comment portion of the hearing  
25 adjourned at 7:10 p.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Marilee J. Young, Court Reporter and Notary Public, hereby certify that the foregoing pages numbered 2 through 48, inclusive, are a true and accurate transcription of my stenographic notes of the Comments heard regarding: THE 2014 VERMONT TELECOMMUNICATIONS PLAN pursuant to 30 V.S.A. §202d held on Thursday, September 18, 2014 6:00 p.m., at Barrett Memorial Hall, Vermont Route 132, South Strafford, Vermont, Before: Jim Porter, DPS, Moderator, and Clay Purvis, DPS, and transcribed by me with use of computer-aided transcription and produced under my supervision for use.

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My commission expires February 10, 2015

October 1, 2014  
m jy