



**Southern Vermont
Communications
Union District**

Arlington Bennington Dorset Landgrove Londonderry
Manchester Peru Pownal Rupert Sandgate Shaftsbury
Sunderland Winhall Woodford

**210 South Street
Suite 6
Bennington, VT 05201**

January 27, 2022

To our Member Towns and their Residents:

The Southern Vermont Communications Union District, a political subdivision of the State of Vermont, is a multi-municipal organization working to solve the longstanding rural broadband connectivity challenges in its fourteen member towns. Since forming in March of 2020, the CUD has grown to include Arlington, Bennington, Dorset, Landgrove, Londonderry, Manchester, Peru, Pownal, Rupert, Sandgate, Shaftsbury, Sunderland, Winhall, and Woodford.

In 2021, after issuing a Request for Qualifications and receiving multiple private sector responses, the CUD formed a public-private partnership with Consolidated Communications to ensure that currently unserved and underserved areas of the CUD are provided with world-class fiber broadband built out to the premises. In partnership with CCI, the Southern Vermont CUD submitted an application to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration's broadband infrastructure grant for a \$9.05 million fiber optic buildout program, and expects a determination in February 2022. A successful application, combined with separate fiber optic broadband incentives under the FCC's Rural Digital Opportunity Fund, will realize broadband buildout to 97 percent of the 2,500 unserved and underserved addresses in the district, with construction scheduled to begin in the second quarter of 2022. We are pleased to inform the public that, under the terms of the partnership with CCI, the CUD would retain ownership of all physical assets built with federal dollars.

While we are confident in our application, we also wish to assure the public that this is not the region's only pathway to connectivity. The Vermont Community Broadband Board recently announced the availability of funding under the Broadband Construction Grant Program, a provision of Act 71. Under this program, the CUD would be eligible for \$4.34 million of funding to build out a fiber optic broadband network. We are in the process of developing multiple application scenarios for this grant, and will submit the proposal most appropriate for the forthcoming NTIA funding decision.

By way of closing, we would like to thank the many people and organizations who continue to support our work: the Department of Public Service; the Vermont Community Broadband Board; the Vermont Community Foundation; our elected officials; and the Bennington County Regional Commission. Most importantly, however, we would like to recognize the delegates that you have appointed to the CUD's Governing Board. They have dedicated their time and energy to solving an immensely difficult problem, and we would not have made the progress that we have made to date without them.

We meet the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month at 6:00 PM. Please join us, and learn more at sovtcud.net.

Sincerely,

Eric Hatch, Chair
Southern Vermont Communications Union District