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MEDIA RELEASE

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

Montpelier, Vermont – The Department of Public Service today announced $3,926,650 in grant awards to Internet Service Providers to serve over 5,800 eligible locations with broadband connections in response to COVID-19.

The Department awards $351,520 to Mansfield Community Fiber to extend Fiber broadband to 676 locations and offset the customer costs for 10 locations; $171,770 to the NEW Alliance (a joint venture between Cloud Alliance and New England Wireless) to serve wireless broadband to 632 locations; $1,964,230 to VTel to serve wireless broadband to 3,992 locations; $56,607 to Duncan Cable to extend Fiber broadband to 35 locations; $152,500 to Comcast to extend Cable broadband to 77 locations; $1,117,570 to ECFiber to extend Fiber broadband to 394 locations; and $112,453 to Waitsfield & Champlain Valley Telecom to extend Fiber broadband to 26 locations. Of those slated to receive service from the grant-funded projects, more than 2,200 lack a connection of 4/1 Mbps and 465 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. 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 Vermonters adapt to working, learning, and receiving healthcare remotely, broadband internet service has become even more of an essential part of everyday life," said June Tierney, Commissioner of the Department of Public Service. "Through the Connectivity Initiative and the Get Vermonters Connected Now Initiative, the Department and Internet Service Providers are bringing much-needed broadband service to underserved locations." "It is our hope that these grants will bring prompt relief to those who have endured poor connectivity through this pandemic," 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 $8,000,000 in funding remains for the COVID-19 Emergency Connectivity Initiative and Get Vermonters Connected Now Initiative, to be awarded in two

more rounds of $4,000,000 each. The awards were made through a competitive bidding process. In making the awards, the Department sought input from the State's Communications Union Districts, who 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 at https://publicservice.vermont.gov/content/connectivity-initiative-0.

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