



Town Of Bolton Partners With Waitsfield and Champlain Valley Telecom To Expand Fiber-Optic Broadband

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Bolton — Waitsfield and Champlain Valley Telecom (WCVT) plans to convert all remaining Bolton residents in its service area to fiber-optics in 2022. This was made possible in part by the Town of Bolton which has committed more than half of their American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding to help expand fiber-optic broadband to more residents through a public-private partnership with WCVT. Approximately \$200,000 in town ARPA funds are being committed to this project as well as a request of matching grant funds from the State of Vermont to build fiber-optics to approximately 440 additional homes. WCVT will also invest its own capital in the project and is requesting an additional grant from the State of Vermont based on the amount of unserved road miles to help fund a portion of this project.

In a letter addressed to Christine Hallquist, the Executive Director of the newly established Vermont Community Broadband Board, Select Board Chair Mica Cassara wrote, “The success that Bolton has experienced with WCVT in the last 19 months expanding the installation of fiber in Bolton has tripled the number of residents with fiber thanks to CARES Act funding and the awesome investment that WCVT has made in our community.” “Our experience with WCVT has demonstrated that they know our area and have the experience, expertise, and willingness to complete fiber projects that address all of the underserved and unserved in our community,” Cassara continued.

Deb Shelby is a Bolton resident who runs a web development business from her home. Over the past few years, she has been committed to expanding fiber-optic broadband availability to more Bolton residents. “I was one of the lucky ones that was able to get fiber to my home from Waitsfield and Champlain Valley Telecom in 2012. Without it, I wouldn’t be able to run my business from my home.” Even before the pandemic, Bolton identified the need for expanding broadband availability in the town of Bolton. The Bolton 2017 Town Plan identified expanding broadband to the unserved and underserved areas as a top priority.

This past year, as the State of Vermont locked down and many residents were working from home and schools pivoted to remote instruction, Deb sprung into action working with the

Bolton Economic Resource Committee and Waitsfield and Champlain Valley Telecom to help secure grant funds to help cover some of the high cost to expand fiber-optics to more residents. Last year, WCVT received a \$137,311 CARES Act grant from the State of Vermont that helped connect 55 customers in Bolton to fiber-optics. This project had to be completed by the end of 2020. Recently, Ms. Shelby went door-to-door to help encourage her neighbors to sign up for the State of Vermont's Line Extension Customer Assistance Program (LECAP) which provides funds to help cover some of the costs to extend fiber to customer home. She was able to encourage 42 residents to sign up for the program and WCVT was able to extend fiber-optic Internet service to these homes.

According to Shelby, "I am truly passionate about bringing fiber-optic broadband to more Bolton residents. From day one, we have been dedicated to working with Waitsfield and Champlain Valley Telecom as a local Vermont company that has been serving our community. We want to meet our town plan requirements to address all of the unserved and underserved areas and working with a local company just made sense for us."

According to Roger Nishi, Vice President of Industry Relations for WCVT, "It's been a pleasure to work with the Town of Bolton on this project. We've done a lot of work and expanded fiber to more residents, but there is still a lot more work to do. We are actively seeking additional state and federal grant funding to help complement our own capital construction budgets to build fiber to more customers. Currently almost half of our customers have been converted to fiber, but we still have many more to go. Building a fiber-optic network in rural Vermont is expensive and requires a significant capital investment and grant funding helps to bend the economics of building rural broadband and accelerate these builds to more rural areas. It's our goal to reach all of our customers with fiber, but that will require time and a lot of capital. The pandemic has shown us how important access to these vital services are."

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About The Town of Bolton:

The Town of Bolton is located in the western foothills of the Green Mountains, on the eastern edge of the Lake Champlain Valley. The Winooski River bisects the town from east to west, as does Interstate 89, the New England Central Railway and U.S. Route 2. Chartered in June 1763, Bolton is a small rural municipality that prides itself on many unique aspects: we are a tight-knit community with acres of forested land bisected by recreational trails, majestic ridgelines, rugged rocky outcrops, and valley-bottom cropland, all tucked in between working landscapes and our beloved Green Mountains.

About Waitsfield and Champlain Valley Telecom:

Waitsfield and Champlain Valley Telecom is a third generation, family-owned telephone company serving the Mad River and central Champlain Valley regions of Vermont and has been providing telephone service to the Mad River Valley since 1904. As a locally owned Vermont company, WCVT is committed to its local communities, and recognizes the extreme value in deploying the most advanced communications services to ensure its rural communities are connected to their urban counterparts with similar quality service. WCVT makes significant capital investment in its network on an annual basis, continuing its network evolution in bringing higher broadband speeds and greater reliability to a larger number of its extremely rural and high-cost locations in its service area. As a 117-year-old, family owned, local Vermont Company, WCVT is uniquely positioned to bring a 100% gigabyte capable fiber-optic network to Vermont's rural communities.