

Chittenden County Broadband

Solving the Gaps in High-Speed Internet in Chittenden County

This November, five Chittenden County municipalities will vote on whether to enter into a **Chittenden County Communications Union District (CUD)** with one or more municipalities. This document is intended to provide an overview of this vote and its implications.

Quick Facts:



on or before
November 8

 **Approximately 4% of house sites (E911 addresses) in the region do not have high-speed internet.**

 **75% have cable internet but would be better served by fiber internet.** 

Fiber internet service is becoming increasingly necessary with multiple devices connected for online uses such as:

SCHOOL • TELEWORK • TELEHEALTH • and more

 **Only 30% of commercial sites in the region have fiber high-speed internet.**

 Chittenden County is the economic engine of the state and risks falling behind other areas upgrading to fiber.

 See a map of internet speeds at:
tinyurl.com/ccrpcbroadband

 **Why are there gaps?**
It is not appealing to internet companies to invest in infrastructure in areas with low density.

 **How do we solve them?**
A **Communications Union District (CUD)** will create a single point of contact to negotiate with providers and leverage grants. Currently, most house sites do not have a choice of providers.

 **What is the cost?**
There is no cost to the taxpayer or municipality per state statute.

Who will vote?

Municipalities who will vote on this item in November are:

**ESSEX TOWN • ESSEX JUNCTION • SHELBURNE
SOUTH BURLINGTON • WILLISTON**

Once a CUD is formed, other municipalities can join by Selectboard vote.

Question to the voters:

"Shall the Town/City of [name of municipality] enter into a Chittenden County Communications Union District with one or more municipalities, under the provisions of 30 VSA chapter 82 for the purpose of improving access to broadband services?"

What's the cost to be a part of the CUD and what is the risk to the municipality?

 If you don't subscribe to the eventual internet service, **there is no cost to you.** There are no direct costs, though a CUD may ask the municipalities to provide space for fiber optic cable, electronics, and other assets required to operate the network. A CUD has no taxing authority and must fund the build-out via grants, loans, gifts, or private investment. Membership in a CUD poses no financial risk to the town or individual taxpayers, by state statute, meaning **taxpayer dollars will not be used and if the CUD fails no liability falls to the member towns or taxpayers.** [See 30 V.S.A. Chapter 82 »](#)

How can we join the district?

 By voting yes on the CUD Article in November, you're voicing your support for your municipality's membership in the CUD. All municipalities that vote yes will become members of a CUD.

Other types of municipal districts:

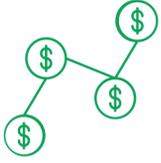
 **SOLID WASTE DISTRICTS**  **CONSOLIDATED SEWER DISTRICTS**  **CONSOLIDATED WATER DISTRICTS**
 **EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICE DISTRICTS**  **NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION DISTRICTS**



What is a CUD?

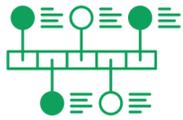
A **Communications Union District (CUD)** is a municipal organization made of two or more towns for the purpose of building, or causing to be built, communication infrastructure together. CUDs *may* plan, contract, build, and manage the infrastructure that will provide high speed internet. The main function of the CUD would be to deliver public funds to the providers to build the network and to provide public oversight to ensure broadband service is provided to underserved locations at speeds of at least 100/100 Mbps in accordance with **Act 71**. By working together, municipalities are more likely to attract a provider and leverage financial resources. After the formation of the CUD, other municipalities can join with a vote of the Selectboard.

How much will it cost to build the network?



The amount is currently unknown. There is a fairly limited amount of public dollars available in Chittenden County for this work because there is a relatively limited amount of un- and underserved road miles. It may be that there is no viable financial or business plan for this sub-set of our region. However, creation of a CUD is the best opportunity available to achieve universal broadband service. The Vermont Community Broadband Board is investing in this effort. They have contracted with a consultant to work with involved towns and the CCRPC to develop a Universal Service Plan, Financial Model, evaluate options and business plan for the proposed CUD. This work should be done by January and will inform the next steps.

How long will it take?



Forming a CUD is just the first step in a multi-year process to plan, fund and build a network to deliver high-speed internet in the un-served areas of our region.

Will it work?



The state now has nine CUDs. Learn more at:

publicservice.vermont.gov/content/vermont-communications-union-districts

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Why create a CUD?

- ✓ **Aggregate demand** – Mixing dense and less dense towns makes the project more attractive to providers / and more negotiating power.
- ✓ **Town boundaries are irrelevant** – Roads, topography, and settlement patterns are more important.
- ✓ **Entire region can benefit** – Eliminates cherry picking by requiring universal service across a region regardless of density.
- ✓ **Risk mitigation** – Individual towns are not on the hook.
- ✓ **Funders are familiar with municipal districts.**
- ✓ **Additional funding opportunities** – Easier access to federal and state grants and loans that require providing services to those least served.
- ✓ **Efficiency** – Network design, construction, and operation can all be more efficient when planned from the onset.
- ✓ **Public accountability.**

After a CUD is formed, what's next?

 Each member municipality appoints a representative and an alternate to serve on the CUD board. That board will work with the **Vermont Community Broadband Board** to develop a feasibility plan for building the network and raise funds to construct and manage it.

More Information:



Visit ccrpcvt.org/broadband or your municipal website for more information:

Essex Town
essexvt.org

Essex Junction
essexjunction.org

Shelburne
shelburnevt.org

South Burlington
southburlingtonvt.gov

Williston
town.williston.vt.us



To view a map of broadband in Chittenden County, visit: tinyurl.com/ccrpcbroadband



To read the full text of the state statute, visit: legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/chapter/30/082



For information about the nine CUDs already formed in Vermont, visit: publicservice.vermont.gov/content/vermont-communications-union-districts



For press coverage on this issue, visit: ccrpcvt.org/broadband/#news