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For Immediate Release

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NEK Broadband Lights Up Internet Service to Its First Customers

Concord, Vermont – While many took a break for the holiday season, NEK Broadband and its partners were hard at work completing the first section of its fiber-optic network and customer installations. Construction crews battled inclement weather to finish hanging fiber-optic cable on utility poles, installing “drops” to customers’ homes, and turning on the very first service on its new network. When this initial project is complete, almost 350 addresses in parts of Concord and Lunenburg, plus a few addresses in Waterford, can subscribe for access to 100 Mbps symmetrical service or higher. The results were seen immediately by customers.

According to Don Whitehead, “It has been a struggle working from home on DSL. I have had to drive to the office just to move a large file. I was pretty skeptical when construction started in November. But I was connected before December 31st. Download speed is more than 50 times faster than dual-band DSL and upload speed is more than 250 times faster.”

George Babcock was enthusiastic, “The installation crew was awesome and it was painless and fast. The biggest difference we’ve noticed is the quality of streaming television and the drastic reduction in buffering. Thanks for bringing the Northeast Kingdom into the 21st century!”

NEK Broadband has partnered with Waitsfield and Champlain Valley Telecom (WCVT), a 118-year old, third generation family-owned Vermont telecommunications company as their internet operator. “WCVT brings over twenty years of experience in building a rural fiber-optic network,” reports Board Chair Evan Carlson, “our customers can rely on their standards of quality service.”

This project was funded under the federal CARES Act, which required that network construction be completed by year-end 2021. NEK Broadband received an initial grant of \$460,000 for parts of Concord. An agreement with Lamoille FiberNet provided an additional \$399,000 sub-grant for a total of over 350 locations in Concord and Lunenburg.

“This initial project proves that the Communications Union District (CUD) model can be successful. We had a very short time to get it designed, engineered, permitted and built. All our partners and vendors, including Eustis Cable, Green Mountain Power, Mission Broadband, the

National Rural Telecommunications Cooperative, VELCO and Waitsfield and Champlain Valley Telecom pulled out all the stops to make this project happen in a very tight timeframe,” said Executive Director Christa Shute.

Additionally, a great deal of volunteer time and effort from NEK Broadband board members was involved. That commitment will continue throughout the five-to-seven-year timeline to reach all 55 towns in Orleans, Caledonia and Essex counties, as well as Wolcott.

There are other successes the organization is celebrating:

As of this month, 100% of the towns in the Northeast Kingdom, plus Wolcott in Lamoille County, are now members of the organization.

NEK Broadband recently received a 6.7-million-dollar pre-construction grant from the Vermont Community Broadband Board (VCBB) to help fund the detailed design, construction planning, and administration of the entire network.

A successful transfer of formerly state-owned fiber means that the organization now has an additional 170 miles through much of the northern areas.

Residents throughout the Northeast Kingdom and Wolcott are encouraged to indicate their interest in subscribing at <https://get.nekbroadband.org>. Although the complete network could take up to seven years to build, registering now will help the process. On the website, potential subscribers will provide an address and contact information, as well as complete a brief survey. NEK Broadband will provide ongoing updates to all those who have registered as well as through local media outlets.

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About NEK Broadband

NEK Broadband is a community-driven organization working to ensure every resident in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont has access to high-speed internet. Affordable internet is central to creating greater economic prosperity and educational opportunities for today's residents and for future generations. Formed on March 3, 2020, NEK Broadband is a Communications Union District (CUD) representing every town in Caledonia, Essex, and Orleans counties, plus Wolcott in Lamoille county.





Technician Adam Haskins of Waitsfield Champlain Valley Telcom showing active service through NEK Broadband in Concord, VT.