

# **NEK Broadband**

Truly High Speed Internet for Northeastern Vermont

Media Release  
July 12, 2021

For Immediate Release  
Contact: Christa Shute, (802) 793-7077

## **NEK Broadband Completes Major Planning Goal**

After months of doing research and crunching the numbers, the citizen-driven organization, NEK Broadband, has created a financially sound business plan to bring reliable high-speed internet throughout the Northeast Kingdom. The network will be based on fiber optic cable added to existing utility poles. The new plan includes service goals, the sequence of construction phases, and, of course, a financial model.

NEK Broadband has embarked on a very ambitious project. 33,336 residential & business addresses have been identified in the three counties: Caledonia, Essex and Orleans. Of these, 20,258 addresses are underserved or unserved. The organization will develop funding for and oversee the construction of 2,803 miles of backbone & distribution fiber so that every address has the option to subscribe to the 100 Mbps speed - or more - a fiber optic network offers.

Earlier this year we partnered with the National Rural Telecommunications Cooperative (NRTC) in order to have the benefit of its nationwide experience. The NRTC is a member-driven cooperative that specializes in helping rural communities like ours develop internet networks. Since the early days of electrification, cooperatives have brought service to areas where commercial companies have not offered it. The NRTC's expert knowledge has served more than 1,500 rural utilities and affiliates in 48 states.

A time-consuming, but important first step has to happen before construction begins. It involves doing a survey of all the utility poles, starting with Phase I, and is called "make ready." Every utility pole has to have room for a new telecommunications cable and each pole must be in good enough condition to support it. Existing lines may need to be moved to make room for the new fiber optic cable. Some poles may need to be replaced or other preparatory work completed. The utilities that own the poles do the "make ready" work. Applications are being submitted to each utility by NEK Broadband and it can easily take six months from the time of application to the utility's completion of the work.

With the business plan completed, grant applications will proceed and as funds are awarded, more progress will be made.

NEK Broadband is committed to keeping our 48 member communities up-to-date with planning as well as the construction progress itself. Go to our website, [nekbroadband.org](http://nekbroadband.org), "like" our Facebook page, [nekcommunitybroadband](https://www.facebook.com/nekcommunitybroadband), and watch for news in local newspapers. Board meetings are online the second Thursday each month. Find the agenda and link on our website.