



For Immediate Release

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**NEK BROADBAND SELECTS PARTNERS TO BUILD AND OPERATE A FIBER-OPTIC
BROADBAND NETWORK IN VERMONT'S NORTHEAST KINGDOM**

***Project will Deliver High-Speed Internet To
Northeast Kingdom Residents and Businesses***

Northeast Kingdom, Vermont —A major step toward bringing fast internet to all addresses connected to the electrical grid in the region was accomplished during the NEK Broadband board meeting on September 9th. The Communications Union District (CUD), made up of 45 member towns, approved a joint partnership with Mission Broadband, the National Rural Telecommunications Cooperative (NRTC), and Waitsfield and Champlain Valley Telecom (WCVT). This strategic partnership will bring high-speed fiber-optic internet service to unserved and underserved addresses (with access to less than 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload internet speeds) in Essex, Caledonia and Orleans counties. The new partners bring extensive experience building and operating rural fiber-optic internet networks that will greatly benefit this large project.

NEK Broadband plans to build a fiber-optic network that can deliver internet service speeds up to a gigabit per second to approximately 20,000 underserved households. This requires construction of more than 2,500 miles of fiber-optic cable. Although the goal is to complete the project in five years, there are many variables, such as availability of materials and skilled labor, that are beyond local control, and it could take up to seven years to complete. New service is expected to be available in some areas by the end of 2022. The partners will leverage state and federal grant funding available to communication union districts for internet improvement projects.

“Creating a universally available, fast, reliable and affordable internet option as soon as we can is critical to meeting the economic, educational, health and social needs of our residents and businesses,” said Christa Shute, NEK Broadband’s interim executive director.

“This partnership brings real-life expertise and commitment to the development of public fiber infrastructure by combining our local resources with a third-generation, family-owned Vermont internet service provider and a telecom cooperative with national reach,” Shute added.

The three chosen partners jointly submitted one of seven responses to NEK Broadband’s request for partnership released in June. The process of doing interviews and related fact-finding was performed by a subcommittee of NEK Broadband governing board members.

According to Jim Rogers, president of Mission Broadband, “This project includes vast, rural, and difficult to serve counties. Our decades of experience working in Vermont, combined with the expertise of our partners and coordination with NEK communities, will ensure that we reach our common goal of bringing affordable and reliable internet service to all unserved and underserved areas.”

“NRTC is a member-owned cooperative, and this type of undertaking is what we are all about. We plan to leverage our considerable experience of building more than 40 broadband deployments and 100,000+ miles of fiber in similar rural communities across the country,” said Jim DaBramo, president of NRTC Broadband Solutions.

Eric Haskin, president and CEO of Waitsfield and Champlain Valley Telecom stated, “We recognize the importance of this project. Our decades-long experience bringing fiber-optic internet to our own customers in Vermont will enable NEK Broadband to activate service to customers more quickly than would otherwise be possible.”

NEK Broadband is currently working through the details of planning, design and engineering for various stages of the project. Building a fiber-optic network won’t happen overnight and takes a great deal of capital. The organization is actively applying for state and federal grants, having recently been awarded \$276,000 for pre-construction work.

About NEK Broadband:

The NEK Community Broadband Communications Union District (commonly referred to as NEK Broadband) is a not-for-profit municipal entity that is working towards making affordable, reliable internet service available to underserved households and businesses within member towns in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont. NEK Broadband was officially formed in March of 2020, and now includes 45 member towns. Albany, Barnet, Barton, Brighton, Brownington, Brunswick, Burke, Canaan, Charleston, Concord, Coventry, Craftsbury, Danville, Derby, East Haven, Glover, Greensboro, Groton, Guildhall, Hardwick, Holland, Irasburg, Kirby, Lowell, Lyndon, Maidstone, Morgan, Newark, Newport City, Newport Town, Peacham, Ryegate, Sheffield, St. Johnsbury, Stannard, Sutton, Troy, United Towns of Gores, Walden, Waterford, Westfield, Westmore, Wheelock, Wolcott.

NEK Broadband is committed to keeping our member communities up-to-date with planning as well as the construction progress itself. Go to our website, 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.

About Mission Broadband:

Mission Broadband, Inc., (MBI) is a company within the ProInfoNet family of companies, originally founded by Jim Rogers in 1995 as independent technology consultants. Our team has provided superior consulting services to its clients across the United States for the past 25 years. Mission Broadband was formed to focus on the needs of broadband within municipalities. Our team has years of industry experience performing broadband network consulting, including feasibility studies, design / mapping, build, implementation, project management, funding availability, public-private partnerships, and administrative/operational support. Mission Broadband's team of professionals has managed large community broadband fiber network projects and understands the technologies involved, operational aspects, and financial models that drive network builds and ongoing operational services. Through active listening and participation sessions, we work with our client to manage the scope of work and deliver a quality product.

About NRTC:

The National Rural Telecommunications Cooperative is a member-driven and technology-focused cooperative that provides solutions to more than 1,500 electric and telecom members in 48 states to help them bring all the advantages of today's evolving technology. NRTC helps rural service providers grow by delivering end-customer technical support, NOC monitoring, network engineering, and revenue-generating services leveraged by a powerful service delivery platform. NRTC's products and services are developed specifically to meet the needs of rural providers and their customers, and include smart grid and utility solutions, broadband engineering, infrastructure and managed network services, mobile service solutions, and programming solutions for video providers. NRTC helps ensure our members' success by bringing national scope and scale to local, rural projects and helping integrate technology solutions with existing infrastructure.

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.