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*Tom Evslin, Chief Technology Officer*

May 3, 2010

Lawrence E. Strickling  
Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information  
National Telecommunications and Information Administration  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20230

Re: Vermont State Priority for the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP)

Dear Assistant Secretary Strickling:

I was appointed by Governor Douglas to be Chief Technology Officer. My office, in cooperation with the Vermont Office of Economic Stimulus and Recovery, coordinates the use of ARRA funding related to technology in Vermont to achieve maximum benefits for the state, its businesses, and residents. Since March of last year, these offices have been actively involved in coordinating applications for broadband stimulus funding. We are pleased to have this opportunity to make recommendations to you regarding the second round of applications currently before you in the BTOP program.

### **Vermont's Highly Recommended Proposal**

The Vermont Office of the Chief Technology Officer highly recommends the application of the Vermont Telecommunications Authority (VTA) to BTOP's Comprehensive Community Infrastructure Program (**Easygrants ID:** 4245; **Applicant Organization:** Vermont Telecommunications Authority (VTA); **Application Type:** Comprehensive Community Infrastructure (CCI); **Name of application:** Vermont Fiber Link). While other projects may provide certain benefits to the state, this application is Vermont's highest BTOP priority in the second round of the program. This project reflects a truly broad-based public-private partnership, involving the Vermont Telecommunications Authority, created by the state in 2007 to facilitate the expansion of broadband and cellular services, Sovernet Communications, a Vermont-based provider of broadband and other communications services, the Vermont State Colleges, the Vermont Department of Education, the Vermont Department of Public Safety, the New England Telehealth Consortium, the Vermont Department of Libraries, and the Department of Information and Innovation. The collaboration shown by these partners is truly commendable example of the collaboration and comprehensiveness sought by NTIA in this round of proposals.

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The VTA project will create a much needed, high-capacity fiber middle-mile network that will dramatically improve the state's broadband infrastructure. This is the only middle-mile application in Vermont supported by either Governor Jim Douglas or by my office, which is authorized to make such recommendations on behalf of the Legislature as well as the Governor.

The VTA's project is the product of a 2009 Request for Proposals by the VTA and its partner community anchor consortia seeking private sector partners in the expansion of fiber optic middle mile infrastructure to support the expansion of broadband and cellular service and the creation of high-speed statewide wide area networks serving education, libraries, and health care, as well as to better serve the needs of public safety communications in the state. The project brings together significant investments by the project's private sector partner, Sovernet, public sector, and philanthropic dollars (through support by the Gates Foundation).

This network will provide robust backbone connections to schools, libraries and state offices in Windham and Bennington Counties, with spurs to Rutland, Montpelier and the St. Johnsbury area. The network will connect key institutions such as Marlboro College, Vermont Law School and the Vermont State Colleges along the route, as well as hundreds of local schools, libraries, public safety towers. This fiber network will allow Vermont to transform our educational and government services delivery systems.

In addition, this network will address a critical barrier to sustainable, high-speed, last mile broadband services and will enable cellular broadband networks to expand in the rural areas of Vermont. In 2007 Governor Douglas created a bold vision of universal broadband and cellular coverage as essential drivers for a vibrant rural economy. The goal is to create the nation's first "e-state", where services are offered to all citizens and all areas of the state. The Governor has also proposed and the legislature adopted a "Backroads Broadband" program that will ensure every citizen can connect to broadband at affordable rates. The combination of the successful implementation of the VTA project and the Governor's Backroads Broadband program will ensure that rural Vermonters can connect and compete in this global economy. As illustrated, by attached maps recently released by the Vermont Broadband Mapping Initiative, already funded by NTIA, significant portions of mid-Vermont, Northeastern, and southern Vermont lack broadband service today.

[http://www.vcgi.org/about\\_vcgi/?page=../projects/bmi/maps/default\\_content.cfm](http://www.vcgi.org/about_vcgi/?page=../projects/bmi/maps/default_content.cfm)

Although our highest recommendation is for the application above, we also recommend the BTOP application from VTEL (**Easygrants ID:** 7508; **Applicant Organization:** Vermont Telephone Company, Inc.,(VTel); **Application Type:** Comprehensive Community Infrastructure (CCI) ; **Name of application:** Vermont Broadband Enhanced Learning Link (VT BELL)). This application provides high quality fiber connections to unserved and underserved locations statewide and offers attractive rates for very highspeed broadband to community anchor institutions. VTEL has a history of successful investment in Vermont telecommunications infrastructure and is also a successful provider of lastmile services.

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## Conclusion

I also want to renew my recommendation to you that Vermont itself is a perfect state for a significant investment of BTOP infrastructure funding. To date, Vermont has not received funding for broadband infrastructure under BTOP. BTOP dollars in Vermont will work to provide connectivity in one of the most rural states in the country and one with a challenging topography. Vermont has committed itself to the goal of universal broadband availability and taken significant steps to reach that goal. BTOP funding for the VTA's project will enhance millions of state dollars already appropriated for funding broadband networks in the state and more than \$6-8 million dollars in additional funding for broadband and cellular expansion in the final stages of approval this legislative session alone (a very substantial sum for a small state like Vermont). We view this investment as a foundation for a transformation of Vermont through the application of technology.

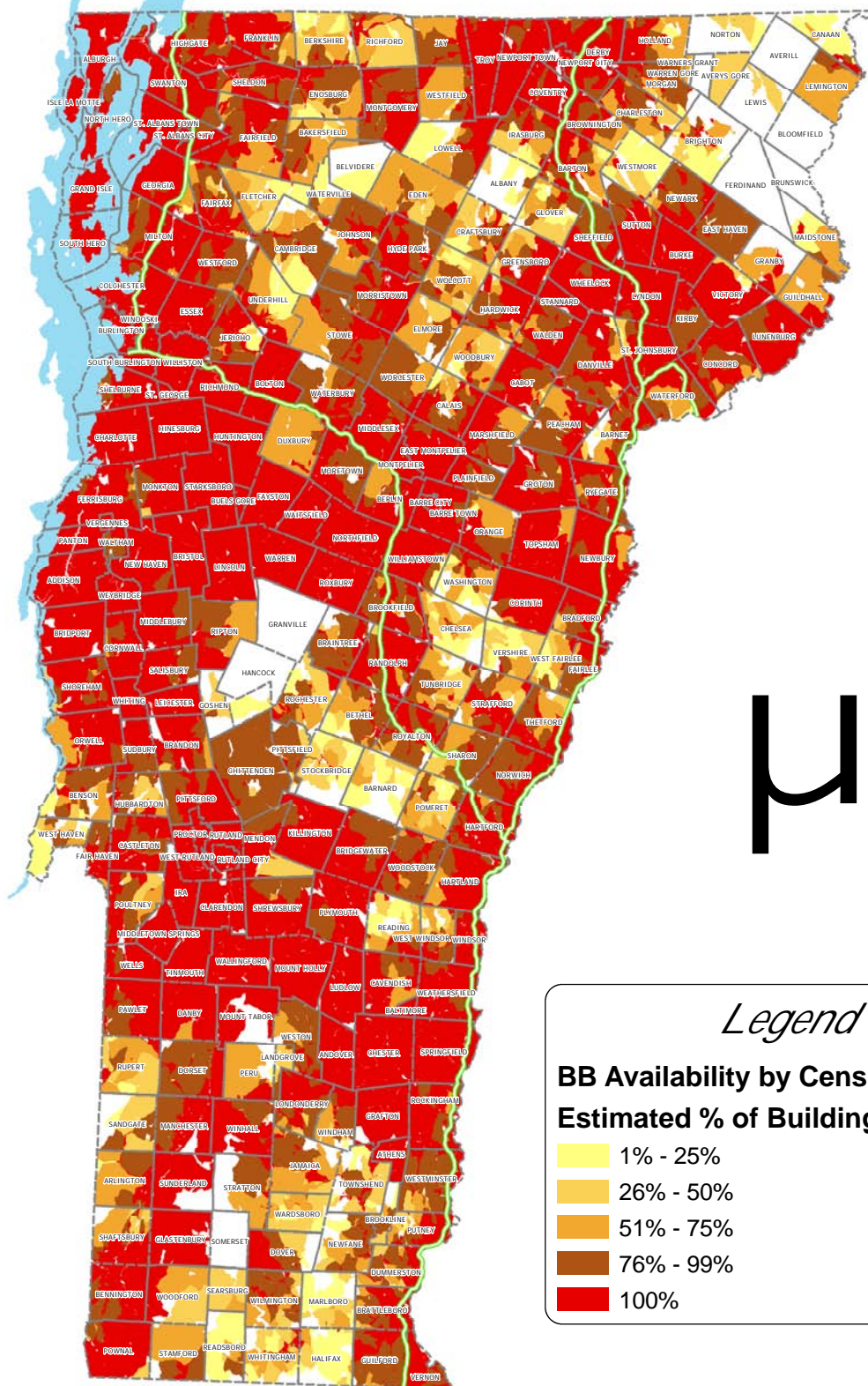
Sincerely,



Tom Evslin  
Chief Technology Officer  
Office of Economic Stimulus and Recovery  
State of Vermont

# Broadband Availability by Census Block as of June 30, 2009

## 768kbps Down / 200kbps Up



*Legend*

**BB Availability by Census Block**  
**Estimated % of Buildings in Block**

- 1% - 25%
- 26% - 50%
- 51% - 75%
- 76% - 99%
- 100%

1 inch = 19 miles



VT Broadband Mapping Team: VT Center for Geographic Information (VCGI), Department of Public Service (DPS), UVM Center for Rural Studies (CRS), VT Telecommunications Authority (VTA), and the Enhanced E911 Board (E911)

**DISCLAIMER:** VCGI and the State of Vermont make no representations of any kind, including but not limited to the warranties of merchantability or fitness for a particular use, nor are any such warranties to be implied with respect to the data on this map.



Data Sources:  
 - Broadband Availability by Block - Calculated by overlaying broadband information submitted by broadband service providers with location of all servicable buildings, including residential and non-residential structures. Includes landline and wireless providers. Does NOT include satellite-based broadband providers. Service as of 6/30/09

ARRA citation: The broadband data represented on this map was collected by the VT Broadband Mapping Initiative (Federal ARRA grant).

Map Author: VT Center for Geographic Information (VCGI)  
 Date/Version: 4/23/2010 - 8x11 size