



Vermont Telecommunications Authority

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Vermont Telecommunications Authority awards \$180,000 in Broadband Grants

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The Vermont Telecommunications Authority (VTA), which is tasked with assuring mobile phone and Internet coverage to all Vermonters by the end of 2010, announced three recipients for the Broadband Grant Program for 2008/2009 in Montpelier. The goal of the Legislature's Broadband Grant Program is to create demonstration projects to test viable models for providing high speed Internet access to all Vermonters. Winners were selected based on a detailed review and selection process.

Jerry Johnson, Chairman of the Selection Committee, said that the applications were judged using several criteria, including a strong public-private partnership and the use of the grants as seed money to attract additional funds or contributions.

"We also place an emphasis on projects that provide coverage available to everyone in an area," he said. "For example, if the project included a WiFi hotspot, it is suggested that it be located in an area that is frequented by the general public."

The selection committee included members of the Telecommunications Authority's Board of Directors, the Department of Economic Development and the Vermont Council on Rural Development.

Jon Freeman, President of the Northern Community Development Corporation said that the grant award would help deliver broadband to much of Eastern Essex County.

"This is a great stimulus intended to improve the economy, educational opportunities, safety and lifestyle of that area," he said. "As such we wish to thank the Vermont Legislature for funding this project."

Rob Giunta of Town of Stratton said that broadband is equivalent to electricity in that both are essential to modern life.

"Thanks to this grant, everyone in our town will finally be able to interact with each other and the rest of the world at broadband speeds, making a lot of life easier, safer and more efficient," he said.

Johnson said that the third grant went to the towns of West Fairlee and Topsham for an extension of the fiber-to-the-home project funded by the federal Department of Agriculture's RUS program and being undertaken by Topsham Telecom.

The Telecom Authority has been tasked with administering the Program since the enactment of Act 79 in 2007. The Vermont Legislature funded the grant program this year with an \$180,000 allocation. The Legislature has mandated that the grants be awarded to municipalities, telecommunication infrastructure developers or service providers and that no grants exceed \$100,000 for any one project.

| Recipient | Coverage Area | Service Provider | Amt. of Award |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| APC Services | Town of Stratton, Lunenburg | APC | \$49930.00 |
| NCIC | Guildhall, Maidstone | | \$80000.00 |
| W. Fairlee/Topsham FTTH | West Fairlee, Topsham | Topsham Telecom | \$50000.00 |

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The Vermont Telecommunications Authority was established by legislation initiated by Governor Douglas and approved almost unanimously by the Vermont Legislature in June of 2007 to assure that every Vermonter has high-speed access to the Internet at affordable rates and that at least one mobile phone network will be available in every part of the state by the end of 2010. www.telecomVT.org is the place to visit to keep current on relevant news articles about the Internet and communication issues in Vermont. It is also the place to sign up to receive emails notifying you of new communication services in the state and ways in which you can help meet Vermont's goal. For more information, contact: info@telecomVT.org