

September 9th Town of Vermont Broadband Update

In December of 2016, the Town of Vermont formed the Citizen's Broadband Committee. The first action of that committee was to create a strategy and gain citizen support.

In January 2017, a mail package was sent out to every address on the Town of Vermont's tax roll. The package contained:

- Letter explaining our goal, our strategy and a request for everyone's help and cooperation.
- A petition to be signed by our citizens asking for the intervention of our governmental agencies.
- A survey to be completed by our citizens documenting the state of their internet and phone service.

Participation and support were overwhelming. Virtually everyone responded. At this point, I'd like to thank each and every citizen and the Town of Vermont Board for their support. Without that support, we wouldn't be where we are today.

With the petitions and surveys in hand, we visited or called each of the governmental funding sources, each of our US, state and local representatives, anyone who could further our cause and the media outlets. I would estimate 90% of all contacts were in person. The appeal is more powerful when it is face-to-face.

We also had several meetings with TDS to form a partnership. Only the internet supplier can request funds. A working relationship with TDS was a critical element. That partnership was formed and we worked with TDS securing the funding for our project.

The current definition of acceptable rural broadband was created by the FCC then adopted by other governmental agencies, such as the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin. The current minimum acceptable rural standard is:

- At least 75% of the connections must have a MINIMUM speed of 25 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload. Many citizens may experience higher speeds.
- The remaining 25% of the connections must have a MINIMUM speed of 10 Mbps download and 1 Mbps upload. The citizens in this category would be greater than 10 but less than 25.
- There is the exception that a very few remote connections in hard-to-reach locations could be less than the 10/1.

This is the minimum performance standard that must be met to receive government funding.

On August 30, 2018, I received the following message from my TDS contact:

“Hello John. I am very happy to share-the Town of Vermont grant work is now 100% complete. We completed our work a full year ahead of schedule as required by the State of Wisconsin which is great for local residents. All customers are now migrating to new equipment and vectoring is fully enabled. As a reminder, vectoring is the technology enablement that allows us to provide required 25/3 and 10/1 speeds. In some cases, higher speeds of 50 Mbps and 100 Mbps will be available depending on distance from the node.

A formal TDS press release is now scheduled for some time next week. I wanted to get this final update to you sooner considering your 9/10 TOV board meeting and request for prep time.

I’d like to thank you for your partnership, ongoing feedback, and patience throughout this process. Please do not hesitate to contact me directly with any questions you might have.”

The stated goal of the broadband committee was to have installed and available to all citizens, wired high speed Internet at an affordable price. That goal has been reached. Now it is up to our citizens to engage directly with TDS to discuss their service options.

With our goal attained, it is time to dissolve the broadband committee, making way for other important town initiatives.

I’d like to once again thank everyone for their cooperation and support. Without everyone’s support, we would not have reached our goal.

Respectfully submitted,

John Hallick
Chair, Town of Vermont Citizen’s Broadband Committee.