



2022 Annual Report

October 17, 2022

Maple Broadband is a Communications Union District (CUD) based in Addison County. Maple Broadband’s mission is to enhance the economic, educational, and medical well-being of the communities it serves by providing a reliable and affordable high-speed fiber internet network, supported by premium-grade customer service, to the households and businesses in its member towns.

Throughout 2022, Maple Broadband’s focus has been on preparing to build and launch service on our fiber-optic network, as well as on obtaining the necessary grant funding to pay for the initial portions of the network. Grant funding available through the State of Vermont, while substantial, will not cover all the costs of building fiber throughout Addison County. Every grant dollar raised reduces the amount of loans (and corresponding interest) that Maple Broadband must incur, which results in lower prices for subscribers.

Maple Broadband has also continued building its organizational capacity to deliver on our ambitious goals.

Fundraising

- Applied for and were awarded a construction grant of \$8.7 million from the Vermont Community Broadband Board (VCBB). This grant award will allow Maple Broadband to build approximately 180 miles of fiber network beginning in 2022 and continuing into 2023;
- Applied for and were awarded an additional \$635,000 of pre-construction grant funds from the VCBB;
- Applied for and were awarded \$781,284 from the VCBB for the purchase of materials;
- Applied for and were awarded a \$30,000 USDA grant that will support capacity building efforts; and
- Solicited and received \$165,000 town ARPA contributions in 2022. At its October 3, 2022 meeting, the Vermont Community Broadband Board approved a policy that will match all past and future town ARPA contributions on a dollar-for-dollar basis. This will result in \$380,000 of new grant funding based on contributions to date. Every additional dollar raised from town ARPA contributions will increase grant funding to Maple Broadband by an equal amount.

Network Pre-Construction, Construction, and Preparation for Service Launch

- Worked with our engineering firm, Vantage Point Solutions (VPS) to complete a detailed engineering design and construction bid specifications for the initial build area (Phase 1);

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- Ordered \$1.2 million of network construction materials in order to begin construction in 2022 and established materials warehousing and management services with network operator Waitsfield and Champlain Valley Telecom (WCVT);
- Submitted pole applications to Green Mountain Power for the Phase 1 build area. Make-ready work must be performed prior to network installation on telephone poles;
- Performed a competitive bid process and awarded initial construction work to Syracuse Utilities;
- Performed a competitive bid process and awarded construction oversight services to Vantage Point Solutions;
- Initiated development of marketing materials and strategies for service launch in early 2023;
- Procured and configured an online subscriber management system, CrowdFiber, which enables prospective subscribers to register interest; and
- Collaborated with network operator WCVT to refine the customer onboarding process and customization of back-end systems.

Operational Capacity Building

- Held bi-weekly meetings of the Executive Committee, which is composed of members of Maple Broadband’s Governing Board who possess expertise in a wide variety of technology and business professions;
- Following a thorough search, hired an Executive Director to support the overall direction of Maple Broadband and to execute Executive Committee initiatives;
- Performed a competitive bid process and awarded marketing services contract to Pivot Group, to help inform the community about Maple Broadband and promote subscriber sign-up; and
- Engaged an auditing firm, Batchelder Associates, PC, and completed Maple Broadband’s first audit.

Plans for 2023:

- Complete approximately 200 miles of fiber network construction;
- Prepare a detailed design package for Phase 2 construction;
- Procure materials for Phase 2;
- Add and support subscribers in newly constructed areas.

Construction Sequence

While Maple Broadband would love to deliver high speed broadband service everywhere as soon as possible, the reality is that it will take years to complete Maple Broadband’s mission.

As a new organization, Maple Broadband is reliant on grants and donations to fund the network construction. Most of grant funding comes via the VCBB, and this grant funding stipulates that priority must be given to areas that are underserved. Under the constraints of this grant funding, some areas are ineligible for construction. For residents of these areas, this is understandably frustrating, but once Maple Broadband is able to borrow funds to continue construction, it will no longer be bound by grant constraints, and will return to offer broadband service to those previously excluded areas.

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Business and Organizational Challenges

In the coming months, Maple Broadband will continue to face significant challenges related to availability and increasing cost of construction labor and materials both related to its own network construction, and upstream with the make-ready work that must happen before we can install our network on telephone poles. This could have a profound effect on construction activities. Maple Broadband aims to anticipate and mitigate these challenges, to the degree possible, wherever encountered as it gains construction management experience.

The energy and time required to manage Maple Broadband necessitates engagement of paid professionals who can complement the hours of work performed by our small group of volunteers. Success in fulfilling our mission depends on support from member towns, through the contributions of delegates' time, energies and expertise, and through town ARPA fund contributions.

Submitted by the Maple Broadband Governing Board:

Executive Committee: Steve Huffaker (Chair), Carl Siebecker (Vice Chair), Nancy Cornell, Shannon Haggett, Dan Sonneborn

Executive Director: Ellie de Villiers (ex officio)

Chief Financial Officer: Magna Dodge (ex officio)

Treasurer: Cy Tall (ex officio)

Clerk: Adam Lougee (ex officio)

Governing Board Delegates: Addison (Paul Nikolich), Bristol (Dan Sonneborn), Bridport (Rick Scott), Cornwall (Magna Dodge), Ferrisburgh (Steve Huffaker), Leicester (vacant), Lincoln (Kate McGowan), Middlebury (Ross Conrad), Monkton (Mark Boltz-Robinson), New Haven (Ellie de Villiers), Orwell (James Robinson), Panton (Howard Hall), Ripton (Billy Sneed), Salisbury (Paul Vaczy), Shoreham (Carl Siebecker), Starksboro (Nancy Cornell), Vergennes (Shannon Haggett), Waltham (Andrew Martin), Weybridge (Spencer Putnam), Whiting (vacant)

About Maple Broadband:

Maple Broadband is composed of 20 member towns in Addison County, forming one of nine tax-exempt Communications Union Districts (CUDs) serving the state of Vermont. CUDs are non-profit, municipal entities formed with the single goal of delivering high-speed fiber broadband service to every unserved and underserved address in their member towns. CUDs cannot tax their member towns or the residents of those towns. A CUD must fund its operations by grants, debt, and donations.

Maple Broadband's Governing Board is comprised of one Delegate from each member town. Representatives are appointed by the town Selectboard and serve for one-year terms. The Executive Committee consists of five voting members and four non-voting ex officio members. Meeting times, agendas and minutes are posted on the [website](#).

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