Biden-Harris Administration Announces Vermont to Receive Over $90 Million in American Rescue Plan Funds to Increase Access to Affordable, High-Speed Internet

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Vermont will use its funding through the Capital Projects Fund to connect nearly 14,000 homes and businesses to affordable, high-speed internet.

WASHINGTON — Today, the U.S. Department of the Treasury announced the approval of over $90 million for broadband projects in the state of Vermont under the American Rescue Plan’s Capital Projects Fund (CPF). Vermont will use its funding to connect nearly 14,000 homes and businesses to affordable, high-speed internet. The funding advances the Biden-Harris Administration’s commitment to connect every American household to affordable, reliable high-speed internet.

“The pandemic exposed longstanding challenges that workers and families face when they don’t have adequate access to the internet, especially those living in rural areas and other unconnected communities. That is why the Biden-Harris Administration’s broadband investments across the country are so critical,” said Deputy Secretary of the Treasury Wally Adeyemo. “This funding through the American Rescue Plan will help provide affordable, high-speed internet service to communities across Vermont, including the most rural parts of the state. We commend Vermont for targeting this funding to places where it is most urgently needed.”

“I am delighted about Treasury’s approval of Vermont’s Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund plan. The COVID-19 pandemic dramatically changed the definition of the modern-day workplace,” said U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy. “Homes across the country transformed into remote offices while work trips and in-person meetings became hour-long Zoom calls. These past few years have only exacerbated the growing digital divide between urban and rural America. That is one of the many reasons why Congress acted with the passage and enactment of the American Rescue Plan Act. From Beecher Falls to Bennington, this American Rescue Plan funding will increase equitable access to high-speed, quality internet
service in Vermont at an affordable cost. These funds will give the “last mile” rural communities throughout Vermont the ability to stay connected with the digital, global economy. As Chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I am proud to have fought for and secured a minimum allocation for the Capital Projects Fund to ensure that small, rural states like Vermont have the resources they need to be connected to our ever-changing world.”

“This is a historic investment in broadband infrastructure in Vermont,” said Representative Peter Welch. “Broadband is essential and every community in our state needs access to high-speed service. This support from the Capital Projects Fund will help us finally get there by expanding broadband throughout Vermont, helping businesses thrive, students learn, and Vermonters stay connected. I am pleased to have worked alongside Senators Leahy and Sanders to bring this funding back to Vermont to close the digital divide and help rural America succeed.”

Treasury today approved $90 million for broadband infrastructure, which Vermont estimates will connect 13,818 households and businesses – representing 22% of locations still lacking high-speed internet access. Vermont’s award will fund the Vermont Community Broadband Construction Grant Program, a formula grant program that provides funding to communities for the construction of locally defined and prioritized broadband infrastructure projects through a system of regional Communication Union Districts (CUDs). The total funding amount allocated for each CUD was determined based on the percentage of road segments without existing access to high-speed wireline facilities. The Broadband Construction Grant Program is designed to provide internet service with speeds of 100/100 Mbps symmetrical to households and businesses upon project completion. The plan submitted to Treasury that is being approved today represents 80% of the state’s total allocation under the CPF program. Vermont submitted plans for the remainder of their CPF funds and these plans are currently under review by Treasury.

The CPF provides $10 billion to states, territories, freely associated states, and Tribal governments to fund critical capital projects that enable work, education, and health monitoring in response to the public health emergency. In addition to the $10 billion provided by the CPF, many governments are using a portion of their State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) toward meeting the Biden-Harris Administration’s goal of
connecting every American household to affordable, reliable high-speed internet. Together, these American Rescue Plan programs and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law are working in tandem to close the digital divide – deploying high-speed internet to those without access today and lowering costs for those who cannot afford it.

In accordance with Treasury’s guidance, each state’s plan requires service providers to participate in the Federal Communications Commission’s (FCC) new Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). The ACP helps ensure that households can afford the high-speed internet they need for work, school, healthcare, and more by providing a discount of up to $30 per month (or up to $75 per eligible household on Tribal lands). Experts estimate that nearly 40% of U.S. households are eligible for the program.

To further lower costs, President Biden and Vice President Harris announced the Administration had secured commitments from 20 leading internet service providers—covering more than 80% of the U.S. population—to offer all ACP-eligible households high-speed, high-quality internet plans for no more than $30 per month. As a result, ACP-eligible households can receive internet access at no cost and can check their eligibility for free internet and sign up at GetInternet.gov.

In addition to requiring funding recipients to participate in the ACP, Treasury’s guidance requires recipients to consider whether the federally funded networks will be affordable to the target markets in their service areas and encourages recipients to require that a federally funded project offer at least one low-cost option at speeds that are sufficient for a household with multiple users.

Treasury announced state awards in June, July, August, September, and October, and will continue approving state and Tribal plans on a rolling basis.

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