

VERMONT UPDATE

FirstNet for First Responders

Department of Public Safety

August 2020

FirstNet Buildout Continues in Vermont

Two new FirstNet towers were brought online in July. Monopole structures in Castleton and East Thetford are intended to provide additional cellular coverage in areas where a signal boost will aid the public safety organizations serving those locations. To date, AT&T has activated five new FirstNet transceivers in Vermont. Under AT&T's contract with FirstNet, 36 new sites are to be brought online in the state by the end of 2022.

FirstNet, or the First Responder Network Authority, is a federal agency formed to ensure the building, deployment and operation of the first high-speed nationwide broadband network dedicated to public safety. AT&T was selected to build the network. Public safety subscribers to FirstNet have access to all of AT&T's commercial spectrum and Band Class 14. Band Class 14 is a part of the 700 Mhz spectrum that Congress has specifically licensed to FirstNet. Low-band spectrum like the 700 MHz band provides several advantages, including the ability to better penetrate walls and other obstacles. It helps to ensure excellent coverage. All new FirstNet sites will

include Band Class 14 transceivers. AT&T is also installing Band Class 14 transceivers on many existing commercial towers to enhance coverage. A list of Vermont towns that have at least one cell site with a Band Class 14 transceiver is on the next page.

As reported to the Department of Public Safety in July by AT&T:

- **New sites activated previously in Vermont are located in Townshend, Shaftsbury and West Bridgewater.**
- **There are now 67 Vermont towns that have at least one site with Band 14.**
- **There are approximately 300 Vermont agencies, representing 5,300 lines, subscribed to FirstNet.**

Essex County is projected to see new sites come online later this year. A contractor hired by AT&T is at work building six towers with FirstNet transceivers to be activated before the end of 2020. Elsewhere in the state, AT&T projects as many as six additional locations could be activated

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To date, AT&T has activated five of the committed 36 new tower locations mandated to be in-place by the close of 2022.

- RTS Director Update

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VERMONT CONTACT

For questions, or to arrange a presentation for your team:

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COVID Slows but Doesn't Stop FirstNet Progress

by Terry LaValley, RTS Director

The Department of Public Safety was recently given an update on the progress that AT&T and the FirstNet Authority were making in building out the Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network (NPSBN) in Vermont. It was encouraging to see that some progress was being made despite COVID-related shutdowns in our economy. Of course, public safety continues its important daily work no matter the circumstances. Projects like FirstNet are intended to help ensure that in public safety's life-saving work there is always a reliable means of communication.

To date, AT&T has activated five of the committed 36 new tower locations mandated to be in-place by the close of 2022. The public safety dedicated spectrum, Band Class 14, has been put in place within 67 towns. By year's end, we could potentially see another dozen new tower sites activated. In this newsletter there are more complete details and I urge you to read that story. DPS will continue to monitor the progress of the network in Vermont and report to our public safety community changes that are being made.



A Band Class 14 transceiver was installed on a tower at Mt. Snow in July.

The pandemic has impacted some of our administrative projects. Last July, the Governor established an Emergency Communications Advisory Council. In forming the advisory council it was recognized that the NPSBN will interface with other types of emergency communication, such as Next Generation 911, land mobile radio, microwave and fiber-based systems. The advisory council will provide input on how Vermont's public safety community may best use the evolving broadband technology with the current systems now in use. As we prepared earlier this year for our first meeting, the COVID-19 virus struck and the public safety community was challenged to address this crisis. For the time being, plans are on hold to convene this group. It is hoped that as some of the challenges posed by COVID lessen, we will be able to meet. The advisory council is composed of representatives from State agencies and members of the Vermont State Firefighters Association; Professional Firefighters of Vermont; Vermont Fire Coalition; municipal law enforcement; Sheriffs; and Emergency Medical Service personnel.

Another administrative change concerns staffing. After serving 30 years in the Department of Public Safety, I recently retired. However, I will be continuing my work on the FirstNet project and as the Director of Radio Technology Services, but as a temporary employee. DPS will continue to provide administrative support for the monitoring of the progress of FirstNet in Vermont. To stay in contact with us, I would urge you to go to our FirstNet web pages located at www.RTS.Vermont.gov. You may also contact us by calling (802) 229-0882 or via email at Terry.LaValley@vermont.gov.

Thank you for all of your work to help Vermont through this pandemic crisis.

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this year. The majority of the new sites proposed for Vermont are in locations where there is limited to no cell service.

Public safety users are not required to use the FirstNet system, but may elect to subscribe and pay rates comparable to or below current cellular rate plans offered by companies nationwide. The intent of FirstNet is to provide an interoperable and robust network, with priority and pre-emption features, to provide public safety users with a reliable connection.

| TOWN |
|----------------------|
| Alburgh |
| Barre |
| Barton |
| Bennington |
| Brattleboro |
| Brookfield |
| Burlington |
| Charlotte |
| Colchester |
| East Burke |
| East Dover |
| East Ryegate |
| Essex |
| Essex Junction |
| Granville |
| Hardwick |
| Hinesburg |
| Jeffersonville |
| Killington |
| Ludlow |
| Lyndonville |
| Manchester Center |
| Middlebury |
| Milton |
| Montpelier |
| Moretown |
| Morrisville |
| New Haven |
| Northfield |
| Norwich |
| Perkinsville |
| Peru |
| Plainfield |
| Pownal |
| Putney |
| Randolph Center |
| Richmond |
| Rutland |
| Shaftsbury |
| Sharon |
| Shelburne |
| South Burlington |
| South Hero |
| South Newfane |
| South Royalton |
| Springfield |
| St Albans |
| St Johnsbury |
| Stowe |
| Swanton |
| Thetford |
| Townshend |
| Vergennes |
| Vernon |
| Waitsfield |
| Warren |
| Waterbury |
| Waterford |
| West Dover |
| West Wardsboro |
| Westfield |
| Westminster |
| White River Junction |
| Williamstown |
| Williston |
| Windsor |
| Woodstock |