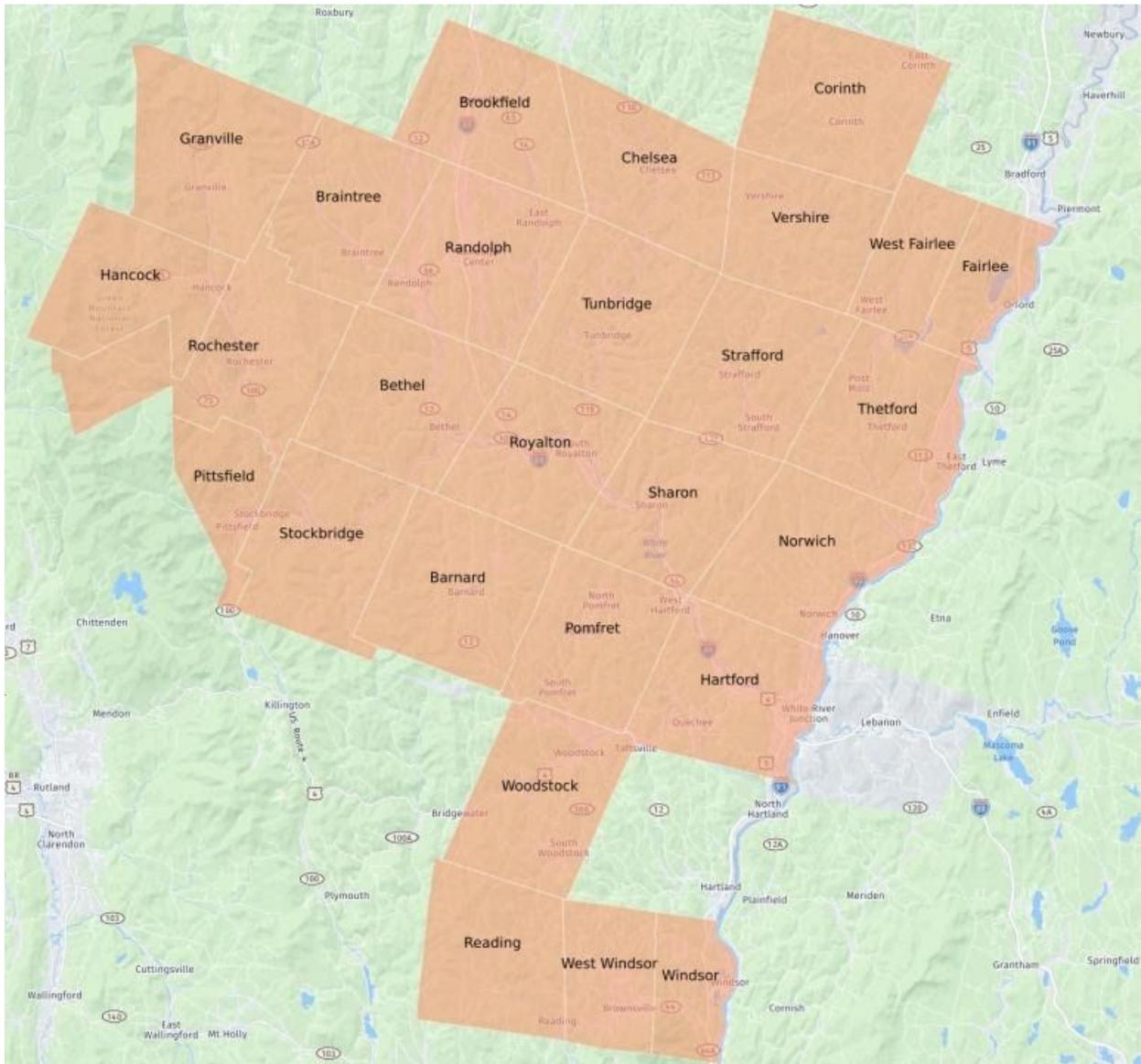


# ECFiber expands to Windsor, Fairlee, West Fairlee, Corinth

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**Vermont Business Magazine** ECFiber's governing board voted unanimously to add four towns to its coverage area: Windsor along its southern edge, and Fairlee, West Fairlee, and Corinth along its northern edge. The action came at the annual meeting of the East Central Vermont Telecommunications District, the municipality that delivers broadband as ECFiber. The district now has 27 member towns and expects to complete construction of its network this year in all areas of its core 23 towns that do not have access to cable Internet.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and in coordination with the Vermont public service department, ECFiber is providing eligible school children with high-speed Internet at no cost where service in the district is presently available.

In addition to no-charge Internet service to eligible students' families, it also offers free standard installations to those eligible families who do not yet have ECFiber's service. This offer is in effect until the end of the present school year.

During the meeting the board was brought up to date on these and other statewide and federal efforts ECFiber will be looking to support and participate in as events unfold.

"ECFiber is committed to making sure the children, educators, and health care workers whose homes we can serve immediately know about these programs," said F. X. Flinn, the newly-elected Chair of the district governing board. "We are committed to completing our network in all areas that currently do not have adequate Internet service this year, and will work with state and federal authorities to accelerate the work in our new towns. The district is also examining opportunities to fill gaps along our borders and to work in cooperation with other districts to see our goal achieved statewide."

Flinn, who lives in Quechee and represents the town of Hartford on the board, replaced Irv Thomae of Norwich, who chose to step down after 7 ½ years as the chair.

Dan Leavitt of Barnard was elected Vice Chair; Thomae was elected to a vacated seat on the executive committee; and Clare Holland of Sharon was re-elected to the executive committee. Jeff Brand, who lives in Wilder and also represents Hartford, was appointed district Secretary, and Dan Childs of Brookfield was appointed Assistant Treasurer.

ECFiber's community-based approach to delivering big-city quality Internet to lightly populated areas of rural Vermont has spurred the state to adopt policies encouraging the development of additional 'communications union districts' across the state. These districts are municipal entities akin to water districts, owned by the towns that vote to form them. By law they cannot be funded from local taxes but instead use revenue bonds to finance network construction, with customer fees covering debt service and operating costs.

Without private owners or stockholders, a spread out population can be served on a break-even basis.

During the current pandemic crisis, with school buildings in Vermont closed, students are participating in their school work on-line. Students without reliable high-speed Internet are at a distinct disadvantage. With ECFiber's true high-speed Internet service available in portions of 9 member towns and all of 13 other member towns, ECFiber is uniquely capable of helping ease this challenging burden.

ECFiber delivers Internet over fiber-optic cable, which provides equal internet speeds in both directions. This makes for much smoother online meeting experiences and allows customers to put their cell phones into WiFi mode when at home without impacting quality.

ECFiber serves over 4500 customers and is presently working to complete areas of Sharon, Royalton, Tunbridge, Bethel, Reading, Norwich and Hartford. When fully built out in the 23 towns that have been designed, nearly 25,000 premises will be within reach of the world-class broadband it offers. The network is a "fiber to the premises" or FTTP type where fiber-optic cable is used to provide equal speed for uploads and downloads, called symmetrical service, making online meetings smoother, enabling people to use the WiFi calling feature on mobile phones, allowing those whose jobs involve moving large amounts of data to work from home, and, because the connection is not shared with other households, service does not slow when everyone in the neighborhood is online.

Presently ECFiber offers speeds of 25, 100, 300 and 800 mbps. Customers also have the option of getting phone service bundled with the Internet. While ECFiber does not offer television, it is ideal for those using streaming services.