



Southwest Region Planning Commission
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June 2, 2020

The Honorable Melanie Levesque, Chair
Senate Election Law and Municipal Affairs Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 102
Concord, NH 03301

RE: SBs 457, 459 and 559

Dear Chairman Levesque and Members of the Committee:

I am writing on behalf of the Monadnock Broadband Group (MBG) in reference to SBs 457, 459 and 559. MBG serves as *an informal coalition of municipal officials, practitioners and other stakeholders with interest in understanding and coordinating relative to broadband issues in Southwest NH*. Southwest Region Planning Commission provides logistical support to MBG in conducting meetings and related activities, and through this correspondence, we attempt to capture MBG's sentiments. MBG has reviewed and discussed these bills during recent meetings and believe they have merit for reasons indicated below.

SB 457 - Establishing communications districts

- Enabling legislation for the formation of communication districts could facilitate the coordination of effective multi-municipal broadband design solutions in NH, particularly in rural areas.
- There are number of towns which have begun moving forward with individual solutions such as the use of municipal bonding to attract/support a provider. However, other communities are still looking for a solution to broadband connectivity and communications districts would provide one more opportunity for doing so.
- If broadband deployment happens on a town-by-town basis, it will likely take many years before the state achieves universal service – if it does at all.
- Communication districts can increase competitiveness in a market by creating another option.
- Rural communities will benefit from aggregating their demand – precisely what communications districts will allow for.
- Neighboring states have more options for improving broadband connectivity than NH and communication districts are sometimes a part of the picture; from a competitive standpoint, it's important for NH to keep pace.

- NH is ready for communication districts; municipal administrators and funders (like the NH Municipal Bond Bank) are already familiar with the mechanics (including the organizational structure and funding) of multi-municipal water and sewer systems.
- MBG members are already talking with neighboring communities about the broadband issues they have in common and communication districts will add to the strategies available in working together toward effective solutions.

SBs 459/559 - Relative to determining access to broadband/Relative to municipal broadband infrastructure bonds

- It is understood that some providers are less responsive to requests for information which can leave municipalities in an awkward position. Clarity on the relationship between non-responsiveness on the part of a provider relative to an area being served or unserved will prove beneficial to municipalities.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comment. Please contact me if you have questions.

Sincerely,



Henry Underwood
GIS Specialist/Planner