

1 TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

2 The Committee on Appropriations to which was referred House Bill
3 No. 739 entitled “An act relating to capital construction and State bonding
4 budget adjustment” respectfully reports that it has considered the same and
5 recommends that the bill be amended as follows:

6 First: In Sec. 13, adding 2021 Acts and Resolves No. 50, Sec. 17c, in
7 subdivision (b)(4), by striking out “critical communications expansion
8 program” and inserting in lieu thereof “Critical Communications Infrastructure
9 Program, as established in Sec. 20 of this act.”

10 Second: By striking out Sec. 20, effective date, in its entirety and inserting
11 in lieu thereof the following:

12 Sec. 20. 2021 Acts and Resolves No. 50, Sec. 34a is added to read:

13 * * * Public Service * * *

14 Sec. 34a. CRITICAL COMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE
15 PROGRAM

16 (a) The purpose of the Critical Communications Infrastructure Program is
17 to improve availability of commercial mobile wireless voice services (CMRS)
18 in areas where those services are currently unavailable.

19 (b) The Department of Public Service, in cooperation with the Agency of
20 Transportation, shall:

21 (1) Evaluate CMRS through a driving test of all federal aid highways.

1 (2) Prioritize road segments identified from the drive test as having no
2 or low-quality voice service using traffic counts and the quantity of E-911
3 business and residential locations in proximity. In identifying priority road
4 segments, the Department shall seek input on a draft set of priority road
5 segments, including from State agencies and regional planning commissions
6 and any other stakeholders that the Commissioner deems necessary.

7 (3) Retain an expert to identify search rings, defined as geographic areas
8 in which towers could be deployed to provide mobile wireless service to the
9 priority road segments. In developing the search rings, the expert shall
10 consider the locations of existing tower sites and the optimal extension of
11 existing coverage.

12 (c) The Department shall develop a program to competitively award grants
13 to facilities-based carriers and tower operators that results in the deployment of
14 new wireless facilities in areas identified for priority in accordance with
15 subsection (b) of this section. In creating the program, the Department shall
16 ensure that the funding is awarded in a manner that:

17 (1) ensures wireless voice coverage national for facilities-based CMRS
18 carriers;

19 (2) provides coverage in unserved areas of all Vermont counties; and

20 (3) provides low-cost or free access to some facilities by Vermont public
21 safety organizations.

1 (d) In developing the Program, the Commissioner may retain outside
2 consultants for assistance. The Commissioner may also consider neutral host
3 networks in areas that cannot otherwise be supported by the Program.

4 Sec. 21. EFFECTIVE DATE

5 This act shall take effect on passage.

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7 (Committee vote: _____)

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Representative _____

FOR THE COMMITTEE