

# Hotspot

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Down the road, Flash's Fix-It Shop now can repair all models of machines, because the shop can download the schematics quickly. On dial-up, that kind of access was impossible.

Another local business is expected to blossom soon, Sears said, because a boat builder will also be able to move architectural drawings as needed over the Internet by broadband. A maple syrup producer had hit a plateau in his Internet sales because he only had dial up. But broadband brings reliable fast service for him, Sears said.

Businesspeople spend less time fussing

with accessing information, and more time working, she said.

"It is a real economic development driver," Sears said.

The Lowell project began when Sears received permission from the select board to write two grant applications to connect Lowell by broadband. Sears surveyed the area and found that enough people would buy broadband, despite the area's poverty.

That led to a \$25,000 grant from the state and another from the Vermont Broadband Council.

Island Pond Wireless installed a transmitter and repeaters in December 2006, bringing 22 businesses and people online.

In the second phase this month, another group of homes and businesses will join the network.

## Connecting Vermont

Thompson, with VPT cameraman Ed Lalonde, interviewed Sears in her kitchen on Feb. 21 as she did a bit of work online. Thompson's series for VPT will feature

one hour on Vermont's digital connectivity and one hour on transportation connections. Each will have a half-hour documentary followed by a panel discussion allowing viewers to call in to participate.

Urban areas offer high speed connections through phone and cable lines on fiber optic cable. Many Vermonters live in areas too rural for profit-oriented communication companies to provide such services.

Lack of broadband service, considered essential for many businesses, can create a society of information haves and have-nots, Thompson said.

The show Connection Vermont "will present a variety of business perspectives on how great the need is and how solutions are being found," Thompson wrote about her program.

"Lowell's wireless broadband project is an example of how Vermonters 'can-do' attitude is bringing high speed Internet access to businesses as diverse as a fix-it shop and an international consultant."