**Governor’s Task Force on Broadband**

**Date, 2025**

**10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**

Virtual Teams meeting

**Task Force Members in Attendance Virtually**: Chair Teddy Bekele; Bruce Crane; Steve Fenske; Gail Hedstrom; Brian Hood; Adam Hutchens; Marc Johnson; Briana Mumme; John Twiest; David Wolf; and Melissa Wolf.

**Task Force members Absent**: Ini Augustine; Daniel Lightfoot; Paul McDonald; and Phil Stalboerger.

**Others in Attendance Virtually:** Eric Clement; Hannah Freeman; Bree Maki; Benjamin Vargas; Alyssa Blatnik; Carol Bossuyt; Ann Treacy; Megan Moudry; Mary Jo Woolf; Ty Houglum; Michael Wimmer; Kristina Ruport; Diane Wells; Samantha Ernst; Hannah Buckland; Emily Feeley; Ace Wesselmann; Todd Kruse; Michelle Rebholz; Paul Solsrud; Andrew Biggerstaff; Jennifer Frost; Deven Bowdry; Kemal Nezarevic; Leila Hussein; and Anna Norcutt Preuss.

**I. Welcome**

Chair Bekele called the meeting to order, roll call was taken, and an overview of the agenda provided.

**II. Approval of minutes from the January 2025 Task Force Meeting**

Meeting minutes were approved from the January 2025 Task Force meeting.

**IV. Office of Broadband Development Overview + BEAD and Digital Opportunity Updates**

Bree Maki, (Executive Director, OBD) provided an overview on OBD, BEAD, and Digital Opportunity. It was shared that Jennifer Frost was promoted to Federal/State Program and Compliance Officer to plan for Diane Wells’ retirement in April 2025. It was also shared OBD has reposted for the Land Use/Permitting Coordinator Position, which will work with Border-to-Border programs as well as BEAD and the Grant Supervisor position was posted to backfill. For broadband projects, site visits and plans for those are in the works with the warmer weather. Recognized that there are a lot of things happening at the federal level, and last week the State Broadband Leader’s Network was cancelled by NTIA in Washington DC. Bree did still go to DC to speak with members of the delegation on the importance of projects with federal dollars, namely Capital Projects Fund, and ensuring Internet Service Providers (ISPs) are compensated for projects those dollars have been allocated to. For Digital Opportunity, we continue to work on our capacity grant and the RFP. For BEAD, OBD is continuing to offer weekly office hours sessions on Tuesdays at 11am. The BEAD eligibility list is on the OBD website and will soon be added as a layer to the OBD maps. There are 2 weeks left in the BEAD Pre-Qualification process, and that will close at midnight on February 27. Also, on the OBD webpage, we have an FAQ, and all questions need to be submitted to that by February 20 so we can respond to those, as well as send them to be reviewed by NTIA, ahead of the February 27 Pre-Qualification end date.

There were questions on the details on conversations at House and Senate committee meetings that OBD has presented at this legislative session; and a follow-up on the question on federal dollars and what that impact could look like. It was reported that as a whole the legislature is looking at compliance, and it was explained that OBD does mapping, site visits, and ensures grant dollars are executed at the location being reported to be served, along with speed tests.

**V. Pole Owner Panel Discussion**

A background and overview of approaches to setting pole attachment rates as pole owners was provided, and a time for discussion from Task Force members on implications of this followed. Eric Clement (Manager of Grid Modernization, Minnesota Power), Mary Jo Woolf (Senior Director, Distribution Business Operations, Xcel Energy), and Ty Houglum (Vice President/CIO, East Central Energy) participated on the panel and lead discussion. The panelists gave introductions, and provided backgrounds on their organizations reach, work, and experiences throughout the state of Minnesota. Panelists gave an overview on how various pole attachment rates are set, the timeline for pole attachment owners and carriers from pre-attachment to post-attachment, and some of the considerations around barriers and complications for pole attachments and aerial in general. The presentation is available to view on the [Broadband Task Force webpage](https://mn.gov/deed/programs-services/broadband/task-force/#2).

There were questions from the Task Force on the cost of make-ready work; on the impacts of Minnesota weather of the work around maintaining and working on poles; and if there are issues with the poles or the attachments, do the pole owners or service providers deal and pay for these issues.

There were also comments from the Task Force on pole attachment agreement fees and how many times these are a barrier on the expansion of broadband into rural areas and make-ready work and impacts on rural America and what is available for dollars. It was also emphasized that the make-ready costs for are the biggest concern for providers, and that pole replacement costs are also of concern and what hinder providers from aerial and poles, and why many have gone underground with deployment.

Considerations were made amongst the Task Force on how the information presented here can inform future Task Force work, and the next annual report. An example given was many local and state rural legislators and politicians want to reach for poles as an “easy task” and now we know more that there are barriers. This is something as a Task Force to know about, and present on, as well as the complexities associated with all deployments with underground and those with overhead.

**III. Minnesota Legislative Updates**

Deven Bowdry (Government Relations Director, DEED) provided a current legislative update. The Governor’s budget was released, and broadband was not included in that budget. This means more of a reflection of the budget fixture overall, and an indicator of how reserved the budget asks are now. DEED’s total budget ask is $1.5M annually. Bree Maki presented at the committees for the House and the Senate. Deven will continue to keep the Task Force updated as we move forward in the session.

**VI. Other business: Feedback on future meetings, Task Force subgroup topic considerations for 2025, March Meeting Plans, and Wrap-up**
Chair Bekele announced that unless the Task Force had plans to visit specific locations or go to a location together and have that be arranged ahead of time, moving forward most meetings will be virtual. This decision was made based on a logistics perspective, and some of the technology issues and delays at the hybrid meetings. As the Task Force gets closer to developing the annual report at the end of the year, however, there is value in getting together and doing things face-to-face and will likely resume meetings at DEED headquarters.

Chair Bekele made a call for presenters and topics to discuss from Task Force members, reminding it does take time for us to line these up so connect with the Chair or OBD directly when you have ideas.

Chair Bekele will also be sending out an email to the Task Force members to gather input on the subgroups moving into this new year. Information on if subgroup topics are still relevant and considerations on if we need to change groups, change names, change topics, etc. will be asked.

Chair Bekele opened the floor for questions and comments for Task Force members and others attending and there were none.

**The meeting adjourned at 11:25am.**