**Governor’s Task Force on Broadband**

**April 17, 2025**

**10:00 a.m. – 11:20 a.m.**

Virtual Meeting

**Task Force Members in Attendance Virtually**: Teddy Bekele; Ini Augustine; Bruce Crane; Gail Hedstrom; Brian Hood; Adam Hutchens; Marc Johnson; Daniel Lightfoot; Paul McDonald; and Melissa Wolf.

**Task Force members Absent**: Ini Augustine; Steve Fenske; Briana Mumme; Phil Stalboerger; John Twiest; and David
Wolf.

**Others in Attendance Virtually:**  Sean O’Neil; Scott Reimer; Megan Moudry; Troy Rasmussen; Kyle Beuning; Bree Maki; Kristina Ruport; Ann T; Michelle Rebholz; Todd Kruse; Emily Feeley; Carol Bossuyt; Michael Wimmer; Karrie Jansen; Jennifer Frost; Paul Solsrud; Theresa Sunde; Joe Buttweiler; HaoPay Lee; Steven Kraus; Kare 11; 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 March Task Force Meeting**

Meeting minutes were approved from the March Task Force meeting.

**III. Department of Labor and Industry Presentation**

The Department of Labor and Industry (DLI)’s **Sean O’Neil** (Director of Licensing & Enforcement, Construction Codes and Licensing Division) provided updates on underground telecommunications infrastructure and the Safety Qualified Underground Telecommunications Installer program. This included a background on DLI’s Construction Codes and Licensing Division, an overview of the current legislation and DLI’s role, certification standards for the program, and department resources.

Questions from the Task Force included how many of these are fully open enrollment options for contractors; clarification around fees for setting this program up; and comments on how following the state laws around this has seen great collaboration between state agencies and other partners.

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

**Bree Maki** (Executive Director, OBD) provided updates on BEAD, Border-to-Border and Line Extension Digital Opportunity, and general updates.

On BEAD, the first round of subgrantee selection, 11a, will close Monday, April 21 at 4:30pm CST. At this time, Minnesota is continuing forward with BEAD under the current guidelines that we do have. The BEAD Application window for subround 11b (all technologies) is scheduled to open May 7 with a webinar on May 6 at 11am. A letter was submitted to Secretary Lutnick, on [Priorities and Proposed Modifications to Minnesota’s Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) Volume 2 and Administrative Streamlines](https://mn.gov/deed/assets/letter-broadband-commerce_tcm1045-679782.pdf). As a reminder, the final proposal requires OBD to demonstrate that all NTIA approved BEAD eligible locations are going to be served, as evidenced by a BEAD subgrantee award. When a location that was approved as eligible does not have an award, OBD needs to provide an NTIA approved source of evidence supporting an NTIA approved reason of why the location doesn’t need BEAD funding. OBD has issued a BEAD Policy Notice on the BEAD website and a template for the [Identification of Non-BSLs for BEAD TEMPLATE](https://mn.gov/deed/assets/identification-non-bsl-eligible_tcm1045-679646.xlsx).

On Digital Opportunity, Minnesota has been given no additional guidance or higher-level communication that makes OBD feel we need to pause on our commitment to rolling out this program in Minnesota. Minnesota’s RFP was approved by NTIA last month. We are moving forward working with the 9 service cooperatives across the state to serve as regional beacons for getting out the funding in non-competitive grants to counties that agree to participate. The plan currently is for each county to get a base grant of $30,000 for activities identified in the Minnesota Digital Opportunity plan. Additional dollars will be available based on unemployment and poverty rates in that county. NTIA will need to approve all the grantees and OBD will keep the Task Force apprised of what’s happening in the Minnesota.

Updates on Border-to-Border (B2B) and Line Extension Connection Program (LECP) included OBD’s current site visits and field validations, which need to happen by the end of the year. OBD is seeing activity on RD 9 (which must be built by 6/30/2026) and RD 10 (must be built by 6/30/2027), and RD 8 & RD3 LECP (must built by 12/31/2025). Line Extension RD4 is planned for early summer and after the second round of BEAD – subround 11b. This LECP round anticipates using Capital Project Funds dollars that have revolved back from grants that have closed, which was approved under the last administration. The program does not have a new source of funding and if something changes once there is more information, the state may want to consider expanding this program.

General OBD updates include Jennifer Frost’s promotion to State/Federal Compliance Manager and Karrie Jansen has taken on the role of Broadband Grants Supervisor. We will be posting soon Grant Administrator senior positions to backfill the work of the team. A new team member is starting as the State Land Use/Permitting Coordinator, to support permitting requirements, BEAD, and making sure we are doing the protective things we need to do in the state. There is a Land Use Charter group that meets up monthly to discuss issues and make sure everyone is sufficiently staffed and prepared. This group also meet ups with the Governor’s team.

Questions from the Task Force included a question on the high-cost threshold for BEAD; budget modifications to the proposal and BEAD and impacts on timeline; the non-competitive Digital Opportunity piece and the fixed-amount of the subaward.

**V. Legislative Update**

**Bree Maki** (Executive Director, OBD) provided a legislative update. Minnesota is moving into the next phase of the legislative session now that 3rd deadline has passed, and the lawmakers will come back and continue working on their omnibus bills. A general forecast of what will come next is that the omnibus bills will process through the House Ways and Means, and Senate Finance committees respectively. After that, they will move to the floor and likely be passed on the floor. The House and Senate bills will not be identical, so they will form conference committees to negotiate the final bill. Currently, Leadership is working on negotiating targets and capital investment packages, and administrative funding is included in both the House and Senate Agriculture omnibus bills.

On another note, there has been a lot of collaboration between House and Senate and Agriculture committees, and it has been great to see that work in action. There were no questions on legislative updates.

**VI. Line Extension Connection Program Grantee Panel**

Grantees of the Line Extension Connection Program (LECP) provided background and discussed their experiences with LECP and the impacts of the program.

**Kyle Beuning**, (Plant Manager, Sytek) has 28 years in the communications industry, and has worked for Century Link before working for Sytkek. Information was shared on the company as well as [Sytek’s service map](https://sytek.maps.arcgis.com/apps/instant/lookup/index.html?appid=7e7056d9a3034cb6abd7d7a03882dda9), and a background of grants in the area. Line Extension funding would help with gaps between other funding sources, including locations considered “served” by the federal map. The Line Extension Program has helped the company grow and the service areas grow as well.

**Scott Reimer** (General Manager, Federated Rural Electric Association) gave background on Federated REA, an electric cooperative headquartered in Jackson Minnesota, which has been in the broadband business since 1997, and Troy Rasmussen (Broadband Operations Manager) was present as well to provide details on technical questions. There are about 6,000 electric customers and 2,000 broadband customers, with a mixture of fixed wireless and broadband to the home, with a concentration on broadband to the home and fiber.

A background on grants projects was provided, and an overview of broadband services. Benefits of this program have included an expansion to healthcare, boost economic growth, enhanced educational opportunities, reduce rural isolation, support aging population, and strengthens emergency services.

There were questions on the GIS map and service speeds; the engagement and processes on the Line Extension Program and interactions with customers; and questions on the timing of programs and comment on delays.

**VII. Other Business, May Meeting Plans, Wrap-up**
Chair Bekele opened the floor for questions and comments for Task Force members and others attending. There were none from the Task Force or other participants on the call.

The meeting adjourned around 11:20am