**Governor’s Task Force on Broadband**

**Wednesday June 11, 2025**

**10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.**

Virtual meeting

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

**Task Force members Absent**: Phil Stalboerger.

**Others in Attendance Virtually:** Steven Kraus; Megan Moudry; Bree Maki; Todd Kruse; Karrie Jansen; Joe Buttweiler; Orion DiFranco; Roxanne Hacker; Sally Anne McShane; HaoPay Lee; Nick Contreraz; Vincent Fancera; Emily Feely; Paul Solsrud; Noah Nelsen; Hannah Buckland; Teresa Ferguson; Ann Treacy; Michael Wimmer; Angie Dickison; Kay Jennerwith; Bruce Fogelstrom; Evan Crabtree; Brian Isom; Patti Horazuk; 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 May Task Force Meeting**

Meeting minutes were approved from the May Task Force meeting.

**III. Neighborhood House Presentation**

Shabazz-Adasi Milton (Digital Navigator, American Connection Corps/Neighborhood House), Noah Nelsen, (Evening Adult Education Program Supervisor, Neighborhood House) and Nick Contreraz(Vice President of Programs, Neighborhood House) gave a presentation providing a background and overview of the work of their organization.

This included how digital inclusion has been developed at Neighborhood House, and how the vision and values have driven the work with members in the St. Paul community. An overview was provided on different digital skills courses, and how expanding the schedule and content of those courses has expanded the range of the courses and increased the number of students who are able to attend it. During FY 2024, 25 laptops were distributed in the spring, 36 students were signed up for home internet, 22 NorthStar certificates were administered, and participants noted feeling excitement and gratitude.

Information on the American Connection Corps was also shared, and the participation of ACC members as Digital Navigators in order to work with individuals on connecting with devices and internet enrollment mentioned above – as well as additional resources like childcare, food, support, and other barriers to digital support.

Moving forward, the goals of the organization will be to ensure clients have (1) reliable and affordable devices; (2) reliable and affordable services; and (3) knowledge and skills for using devices. Further, working to find ways to embed digital equity and literacy into all programming at Neighborhood House, and building partnerships to fill the gaps for what may be missing through being creative and being responsive to community needs.

Questions from the Task Force included on how the Task Force could support work moving forward; challenges that are encountered when someone is trying to learn more about their digital capabilities; and stories of impact from clients at Neighborhood House; and partnerships with Internet Service Providers

An additional resource shared was that the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) can connect people to a free cellphone program called Lifeline. They can call the PUC at 651-296-0406, email consumer.puc@state.mn.u, or visit the website for more information: <https://mn.gov/puc/consumers/telephone/>.

**VI. Legislative Updates**

Bree Maki (Executive Director, Office of Broadband Development) provided legislative updates. The agriculture omnibus bill passed during the regular session and was signed into law and included in it the funding for the OBD. There were no changes to broadband otherwise, but some changes to installer requirements were included in an earlier bill. It looks like Budget Bill will be signed into law by the end of the week by the governor.

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

Bree Maki (Executive Director, OBD) provided updates on OBD. This includes the work being done on the ongoing Border to Border (B2B) Program and Line Extension (LE) Connection Program, this includes closeouts and progress reports, and 42 grants which need to be closed out by the end of this fiscal year. OBD’s mapping vendor, Connected Nation, has been out and working on doing field validations since February. Grants with Capital Projects Fund (CPF) are being tracked to figure out remaining grants with the goal of doing a LE Round 4, and how to make the best use of those funds with the BEAD changes on the federal level.

The OBD received a notification of termination of Digital Equity Act funding. OBD is still working to fully digest what this means in Minnesota and the presentation from Neighborhood House really underlines what sort of work could have been done with the DEA funding in Minnesota and was outlined in Minnesota’s Digital Opportunity Plan. As OBD waits to see what actions will be taken by other agencies, like the state’s Attorney General’s Office, it could be years down the timeline.

Significant changes on the federal level have been released on BEAD, and OBD is working through to understand the impacts and the processing timelines. One major change is that states and territories have 90 days from June 6 to essentially start the program over, complete subgrantee selection, and submit a final proposal. OBD wants to do what’s best for our state first and foremost, but we also have to leverage what we can with the guidelines we are given and all of the unknowns right now. Minnesota never had nondeployment funds, but other states are having what they were using for nondeployment clawed back and will not be reimbursed. Minnesota has been cited as a model by NTIA on hiring choices around NEPA requirements. OBD is working on providing next steps and updates just as soon as we know them.

Questions from the Task Force included how the DEA termination will impact OBD’s work; how the Task Force can support OBD’s work; and clarification on round 11a applications and general timelines.

General questions from attendees were on locations already served by Unlicensed Fixed Wireless.

**VI. Other Business, Upcoming Meeting Plans, Wrap-up**
Chair Bekele opened the floor for questions and comments for Task Force members and others attending, there were no questions.

There is no Task Force meeting in July, and to be considered “present” and ask questions, the Task Force meeting in August must be attended in person and will be at the Minnesota Farmfest August 6. More information to come, but at this time Task Force members have RSVP’d and we will have quorum.

Meeting adjourned around 11:15am.