

## MEDA Broadband Committee Meeting

March 1, 2021

2pm

**Present:** Stephen Walter, Steve Simonson, Kristian Richardson, Paul DeWolfe, Russ Fletcher, Adam Schafer, Elvis Nuno, Mehmet Casey, Andy Shirliff, Austin Trunkle, Tracy McIntyre, Charlotte Lauerman, Anne Boothe, Austin Trunkle, and Gloria O'Rourke.

### Bill List Discussion:

**MEDA's Bill:** Big Sky EDAs lobbyists feel that it is too late to run our bill. Still, the process was good for this committee to go through and effort was not wasted. Efforts are going into SB297.

**SB297:** Following a review of the bill and much discussion, the MEDA Broadband Committee will recommend support of this bill with clarification on the layering of funds. This bill is moving ahead to its second hearing.

**HB422:** moving ahead; passed second reading today with amendments.

**HB51:** Tax abatement bill has moved on to the house.

**HB494:** This bill may not appeal to MDOT, but it improves collaboration amongst partners, such as those laying fiber, and prevents digging up a new road. Gloria will place this bill on the MEDA Legislative Committee agenda. This committee supports it and recommends it to MEDA.

**State Library** study bill should be introduced next week.

### What is next? What should we tackle?

- Explore why Montana is 50<sup>th</sup> in Internet Infrastructure Deployment....
  - <https://matr.net/news/americans-need-better-internet-states-can-help-pave-the-way/>
  - <https://www.rstreet.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/updated-final-2020-Broadband-Scorecard.pdf> Thank you for the report, Russ.
  - Elvis mentioned working with ag neighbors to improve access. There are now GPS combines and equipment. Tracy noted some ag communities are served very well; but there are differences for wifi, cell service, and fiber.
  - Paul talked about doing 5,000 miles of line Montana and there were challenges experienced like in no other state.
  - Issues are at the legislative level as well as the local level.
  - Steve S – Gov Gianforte are looking for regulations that are burdensome. Possibly a list could be sent on broadband deployment. [survey.constantcontact.com](http://survey.constantcontact.com) on Montana Chamber website.
- Paul said he will observe what is happening in Idaho and see if it can be duplicated in Montana.

### Posted in the chat:

Russ: Montana's Regulations Rated Worst in the U.S. for Internet Infrastructure Deployment Process – 50th in the nation — for broadband internet access. <https://matr.net/news/americans-need-better-internet-states-can-help-pave-the-way/>

Russ: This is Paul DeWolfe's company: <http://www.access-consulting.net/about-us>

Russ: Video: Ammon, ID – unlike any other open access network in the world. <https://matr.net/news/video-ammon-id-unlike-any-other-open-access-network-in-the-world/>

**Next steps:**

1. Review the deployment report and share your observations/suggestions for steps Montana can take. We must do better!

[Report](#) Attached is the excel spreadsheet that explains the data.

2. Submit your "red tape" issues as per the Governor's survey - see button below. Thank you!

**REDUCING REGULATIONS THROUGH RED TAPE RELIEF**

The Governor's Office is still looking for feedback from the business community on how to reduce regulations and the cost of doing business in Montana. This survey will be open until mid-March and we ask that you please take a few moments to answer five quick questions regarding:

[Take the Survey!](#)

- Which regulations impact your ability to grow?
- What is the cost or burden of compliance?
- Do you have a recommended solution?

3. Next Meeting March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2pm