

## MEDA NextGen Broadband Committee

October 26, 2020

2:00pm

**Present: Bethany Chinadle, Mehmet Casey, Allison Corbyn, Tom Kaiserski, Anne Boothe, Tracy McIntyre, Steve Simonson, Jennie Stapp, Russ Fletcher, Paul Tuss, Diane Smith, Brian Obert, Sharon Peterson, and Gloria O'Rourke.**

### 1. Conversations

#### **An update was given on various conversations:**

- Allison shared info on legislative ideas on access and right-of-way. A draft bill was discussed that details access to technology.
- Bethany shared every company has struggled with right-of-way; plans can take over a year to get approval. Montana did streamline some parts of the process last year. Tribal areas and BIA permits are time consuming.
- Tribal areas have misinformation and misconceptions of what is available.
- Aerial pole connection is rare these days. Buried lines require less maintenance and no pole hassles. Rural co-ops are often easier to work with than NWE.
- Steve shared a conversation with Elaina Zemple of WY. WY started back in 2016 to create the Business Ready Commission which is a government and private group. WY has legislation that allows them to rapidly deploy dollars, such as CARES Act funding. Regarding right-of-way, WY has legislation that provides for this which first tackles rural and underserved areas. While not perfect, Montana could adopt.
- Anne is holding a Remote Working Group meeting next week.
- Caution for overbuilding in areas that already have broadband.

From the chat:

- From Anne Boothe: <https://mainstreetmontanaproject.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Attachment-7-Interconnectivity-Telecommunications.pdf> Just wanted to remind everyone of the Main Street Montana Project Broadband KIN recommendations. - just for comparisons.
- FCC Chairman Ajit Pai touted false broadband data despite clear signs it wasn't accurate <https://matr.net/news/fcc-chairman-ajit-pai-touted-false-broadband-data-despite-clear-signs-it-wasnt-accurate/>
- FCC Has Money But Lacks Data for Broadband Implementation <https://matr.net/news/fcc-has-money-but-lacks-data-for-broadband-implementation/>

### 2. Legislation – MT State Library

Jennie updated everyone that Montana will soon be a part of National Broadband Availability Mapping. A discussion was held on why mapping can be so off. It is reported via Census track which is different from the FCC map. Triangle can track down to the block level; there is caution in making it public because people won't call before they dig. There are fines in existence for those who dig first.

Once Montana is accepted by NBAP, we can begin participating in cohort meetings. Montana is allowed ten users with access to the data. Three will be taken by the state library.

Jennie noted a study bill often has very loose language (such as having a statewide coordinator) until the study has been conducted. Russ feels we are past a study and prefers action: we need a state coordinator or an office so that Montana can react quickly to broadband needs. Jennie feels legislation could run in parallel with a study bill. A study process would provide greater chance of success.

Paul Tuss feels the two are not exclusive. A coordinator could be established as well as a study.

Sharon Peterson looked up legislation and forwarded it to an existing State Senator, Mary McNally, Vice Chair of the Energy and Telecommunications Committee, and interest was expressed on addressing broadband.

Steve Simonson noted the NextGen report has broadband recommendations.

3. **The next meeting** will be Monday, November 9<sup>th</sup>, at 2pm.

- To do: Tracy will check with Geoff on Montana legislation for broadband.
- All: review the Broadband KIN report.
- All: Obtain feedback on the Wyoming legislation that exists as well as Montanan's feedback.
- Share Jennie's legislative document with the MEDA Legislative Committee. The broadband committee will go deeper but share with the Legislative committee at this time.