

MEDA Broadband Committee
September 14, 2020
2:00pm



On the call: Tracy McIntyre, Chair; Brett Simons, Steve Simonson, Mehmet Casey, Charles Robison, Russ Fletcher, 841-2034 Tom Kaiserski, Diane Smith, Gordon Fowler, Jennie Stapp, Allison Corbyn, Todd O’Hair, Paul Reichert, Anne Boothe, Brian Obert, and Gloria O’Rourke.

[MATR’s Resource Link for all things Broadband in Montana](#)

1. Introductions

Tracy welcomed everyone and requested introductions via roll call.

2. Areas of Focus and Discussion

A. Statewide Broadband Mapping and Strategic Planning

- Identify the terminology of broadband in the state
- Identify the acceptable speeds for the State of Montana
- Identify partners and roles/responsibilities, who is working on what
- Determine what communities have and do not have acceptable broadband access
 - Map out the hodgepodge of service
 - Montana Telecommunication Association
 - Montana Libraries
 - VisionNet
- Develop statewide *strategies* to address the lack of broadband
 - Funding Sources
 - Current Providers availability for expansion
 - FCC and other regulations
 - Alternative efforts and options (community broadband, 5G, etc)
- Educate and Identify barriers for broadband adoption
 - Costs and social barriers
- Understand the workforce needs to build, repair and maintain broadband in Montana

Discussion:

- Allison reported that there are currently some Federal efforts to obtain accurate mapping for broadband across the U.S.
- Diane shared lack of measurement parameters (speed, jurisdiction, what technologies are involved i.e., wireless vs wired, etc.)
- Russ: Montana needs to join the National Broadband Availability Map project. We must have an inventory. [Link](#)
 - Action Item: Charles will invite the NTIA to the next meeting
 - Action Item: Russ and Memhet will research how and costs to join
 - Action Item: Allison will follow up with how Wyoming joined.
- Kristian shared this link: https://www.vision.net/network_map.html and shared information on VisionNet.
- Broadband is defined as.....What? We need a definition of terminology, what constitutes accurate speeds as well as a map.

- Jennie shared this link Montana State Library:
<http://montana.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/0d3e50d35657481a88864ea33ccb04f3>
- Paul R – we need a plan to overcome existing barriers and strategies how to get things done.
- Is this our role? This committee's role: to create a statewide strategy. Answer: Yes, this is our role.
 - Jennie reported that the Library system is also working with the state to get all state office connection speeds across the state. Should be available this week.
- Action Item: MCDC does have an application in for a small amount of money EDA CARES funding to assist with strategic planning and mapping. Anne Boothe and Paul Reichert will work on this with Tracy. Paul R is wondering if other EDA recipients would chip in some funding for this study.
- Action Item: Allison: How do you grant businesses fund the "last mile" connection costs? Approach Ken Fichtler about this and using CARES funding.
- KIN Report Link: <https://mainstreetmontanaproject.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Attachment-7-Interconnectivity-Telecommunications.pdf>

B. Broadband Availability and Economic Development

- Determine how the State, MEDA, partners etc. can work with local/regional economic developers to use broadband availability for business and workforce attraction
- Support the development of the remote workforce efforts

C. Legislative Actions

- State of Montana
- Federal

D. Best Practices

- Continue to find, share and review best practices from other States

3. Discussion and Decision on Montana CARE funds

- a. NOTE- this committee is under MEDA so any formal request will need MEDA board's approval unless another agency or organization (MCDC for example) will sponsor the activity.

4. Next meeting- Sept. 28th, 2:00pm

- a. Congressional Delegation Updates
- b. NTIA presentation
- c. Areas of Focus Tasks Report out