

MEDA NextGen Broadband Committee

September 28, 2020

2:00pm

Present: Allison Corbyn, Mehmet Casey, Jerry Merkatz, Bethany Chinadle, Brian Obert, Russ Fletcher, Paul Reichert, Mary Roehr, Britt Fontenot, Geoff Feiss, Aimee Grmoljez, Steve Simonson, Michael Mattmiller, and Gloria O'Rourke

Allison Corbyn welcomed everyone to the call.

1. Reports from Congressional Staff

Update from Congressional Delegation Staffers: What is happening on Capitol Hill regarding Broadband Deployment, Development, and Adoption

- a. Senator Jon Tester
Robyn Madison: Working on Community Connect Program-Funding for rural communities to develop and improve broadband access. Only one community in Montana has applied. December 23, 2020 application deadline.
- b. Senator Steve Deines
Josh Sizemore: Working on reducing requirements for and size of licensing, supporting development of new technologies, supporting funding for expanded FCC mapping efforts.
- c. Representative Greg Gianforte
Brett Simons: Also supporting efforts to fund FCC mapping efforts legislation.

2. Committee Action Item Updates

- a. Russ Fletcher: Held a meeting with Charles Robison; progress is being made to develop an improved broadband mapping for states. Regarding the National Broadband Availability Map, twenty-two states have signed on to the effort; Montana has not yet. There is no cost to sign on, but an agency needs to commit.
- b. Allison Corbyn: Reviewing Wyoming model. Wyoming has a state broadband coordinator. They have developed a simple reporting tool for communities to supply current data for their area. Possibility of creating broadband funding to small businesses to improve connectivity of up to \$20,000. Wyoming to use federal CARES Act funding to expand broadband infrastructure. The Wyoming Business Council Board of Directors approved 37 projects totaling \$86 million in federal CARES Act funding to expand broadband infrastructure throughout the state. <https://matr.net/news/wyoming-to-use-federal-cares-act-funding-to-expand-broadband-infrastructure/>
- c. Alison provided an update on the MT Cares Act and the possibility of broadband connectivity.

3. Misc. and Next Call

The next meeting will be Monday, October 12th, at 2pm.