**Governor’s Task Force on Broadband**

**Monday, March 27, 2023 Minutes**

**10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**

**Comcast**

**10 River Park Plaza**

**St. Paul, MN 55107**

**and**

**Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams**

**Task Force Members Present in Person:** Teddy Bekele, Barbara Droher Kline, Steve Giorgi, Marc Johnson, Phil Stalboerger, Theresa Sunde

**Task Force Members in attendance virtually:** Yvonne Cariveau, Jason Hollinday, Brian Krambeer, Micah Myers, Jim Weikum, Dave Wolf

**Task Force Members Absent:** Nolan Cauthen, Steve Fenske, Paul Weirtz

**Others in Attendance in person:** Hannah Buckland, Kalyn Hove, Tom Karst, Bree Maki, Ann Treacy

**Others in Attendance virtually:** Amanda Bergson-Shilcock, Carol Bossuyt, Deven Bowdry, Jennifer Frost, Steve Howard, Karrie Jansen, Laura Kangas, Mike Wimmer

1. **Welcome, Task Force Introductions, Approval of Minutes**

Chair Bekele called the meeting to order and roll call was taken. He provided an overview of the agenda. Meeting minutes from February 22, 2023 were approved.

1. **Welcome from Comcast**

Kalyn Hove, Regional Senior Vice President, Midwest Region at Comcast welcomed everyone to their region office. She gave an overview of the successes and initiatives of Comcast in Minnesota.

1. **Legislative Update**

Deven Bowdry, Government Relations Coordinator for DEED, presented the Task Force with a legislative update. Both the Senate and House Ag Committees will amend their omnibus language and then discuss the bills. The Senate proposed $700,000 for the Office of Broadband Development operating budget for the two years. They also proposed $100 million for infrastructure grants ($60 million for Border to Border and $40 million for Low-Density). Spring break is April 5-11. Broadband is unlikely to pass as a stand-alone bill, but will be included in the Ag bill.

1. **Office of Broadband Development Update**

Bree Maki, Executive Director, gave an update from the Office of Broadband Development. Office staff have been presenting at the regional township meetings throughout the state, sharing information about the office and programs delivered. We will be hiring more staff. The Line Extension Connection Program has over 1,700 applicants so far. The OBD office is in the middle of scoring the 88 grant applications that came in for the eighth round of the Border-to-Border Broadband Infrastructure grant program and the first round of the Low-Density Pilot Program. In digital equity news, there are 98 Digital Equity Committees registered so far. There were 70 applicants for the non-competitive Digital Equity Mini-Grants. The Governor’s Task Force on Broadband is open for applicants for the Governor’s new term, so please apply if interested. Bree gave out certificates from the Governor’s Office to the outgoing Task Force members.

1. **NTIA Update**

Tom Karst, Federal Program Officer, Office of Internet Connectivity and Growth, National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) of the U.S. Department of Commerce, gave the Task Force an update on the Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) and Digital Equity federal funding programs. The FCC is in the process of revising their maps and reviewing challenges; the maps will be the basis for the state allocations scheduled to be announced June 30. The 5-year plan for BEAD is due July 12. Once approved by NTIA, that will trigger a one-year deadline for the final proposal. The final plan is due December of 2024. October of 2027 is the end of the program when service needs to be up and running for all of the awarded projects. $5 million has been awarded for the planning of the BEAD funding. FCC Affordability Connectivity Program is out there for eligible people to sign up for. Fiber is the preference but there is a high-cost threshold for alternative technology that needs to be set .Matching funds of at least 25% are required for the BEAD grants. Minnesota Office of Broadband Development is well-established and is a North Star for the development of other state’s broadband offices.

1. **National Skills Coalition Digital Equity Presentation**

Amanda Bergson-Shilcock, Senior Fellow, National Skills Coalition, presented to the Task Force about their work nationally to close the Digital Skill Divide. They researched what employers are looking for regarding digital skills and shared what Minnesota leaders can do with this data to help both employers and workers.

1. **Around the Table – Thoughts of Wisdom from Outgoing Task Force Members**

Chair Bekele asked that each Task Force member share suggestions for future task force members, about things that went well, etc. Thank you to all the Task Force members for their service!

1. **Public Comment, Other Business, Wrap-Up**

Chair Bekele asked if any Task Force members or the public had items to bring forward. Discussion was held on one last letter to legislators on the importance of funding broadband grants so a construction season is not lost since federal funds won’t come through for a couple years yet.

Presentations from today’s meeting are posted on the Governor’s Task Force website: [Broadband Task Force / Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (mn.gov)](https://mn.gov/deed/programs-services/broadband/task-force/)

The meeting was adjourned.