



Minnesota Broadband Coalition
Broadband Day on the Hill
March 15, 2017

Media Advisory

10 am Press Conference for first-ever Rural Broadband Day at the Capitol

WHAT: 90% of Minnesotans without basic broadband access live in rural. Over 50 members of the Minnesota Broadband Coalition are heading to the Capitol on Wednesday, March 15, for a first-ever Day at the Capitol to bring rural perspectives on the need for broadband directly to state legislators.

The Minnesota Broadband Coalition invites you to attend a Press Conference, hosted by Steve Fenske, Minnesota Association of Townships. Speakers include:

- Mark Erickson, Economic Development Authority Director, City of Winthrop
- Joe Buttweiler, Partnership Development Manager, CTC
- Marc Johnson, Executive Director, East Central Minnesota Educational Cable Cooperative (ECMECC)
- Chuck Novak, Mayor of Ely
- Sophia Stading, 6th grader, Lake Crystal MN
- Sammie Garrity, 6th grader from Lutsen MN

WHEN: 10:00 am, March 15, 2017

WHERE: [State Office Building Room N 500](#), 100 Rev Dr Martin Luther King Jr Boulevard, St Paul, MN 55155. The press conference will be live-streamed on the “I Endorse the Minnesota Broadband Vision” Facebook Group Page

WHY: To ensure that rural needs and perspectives are represented in legislature’s deliberations about public funding for broadband.

HOW: For interviews or additional information please contact Steve Fenske, Attorney; Member Services & Government Relations, Minnesota Association of Townships, SFenske@mntownships.org (763) 497-2330 – Main Office, (800) 228-0296 – Toll Free

Wall of images of rural people expressing how they use broadband backdrops the press conference

The Minnesota Broadband Coalition is an informal group of organizations and individuals who have come together to advocate for the proposition that: *Everyone in Minnesota will be able to use convenient, affordable world-class broadband networks that enable us to survive and thrive in our communities and across the globe.* More info at <http://mnbroadbandcoalition.com/> or “I Endorse the Minnesota Broadband Vision” Facebook page.

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Moderator – Steve Fenske

Steve Fenske is an attorney and lobbyist with the Minnesota Association of Townships (MAT), a non-profit serving 1,779 township governments in the State of Minnesota. Steve's time is divided among legislative and member service duties, answering legal questions for township officers, and providing trainings for new and veteran town officers at numerous MAT events – all of which further the goal of providing better local government. For the past two years, Steve has represented MAT as one of 17 members of a Broadband Coalition of statewide and community interest groups working to achieve the goal of a high-speed Border-to-Border Broadband network.

Statements by:



Mark Erickson

Mark Erickson is the Economic Development Authority Director for the city of Winthrop, Minnesota. He served as city administrator from 2008 to 2014 and worked closely with the RS Fiber Cooperative project in Sibley, Renville, Nicollet and McLeod counties in Minnesota.

Prior to Winthrop Mark was employed by Hiawatha Broadband Communications in Winona, Minnesota, working with communities interested in building a Fiber To The Home networks.

Mark currently serves on the RS Fiber Cooperative Board of Directors, the Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association Board of Directors and chairs the League of Minnesota Cities Telecommunications Task Force. He is a former member of the CK Blandin

Foundation's Telecommunications Strategy Board.



Joe Buttweiler

Joe Buttweiler with Consolidated Telecommunications Company (CTC) is actively involved in the promotion and deployment of broadband services to all areas of Minnesota. At CTC Joe's role is to develop strategies and partnerships which will expand broadband services to those without access and to those seeking improved access. Joe's background originates in the electric industry having spent time at working for a Generation & Transmission Cooperative and at Arrowhead Electric Cooperative in Northeastern Minnesota. While at Arrowhead Joe oversaw the electric cooperatives Fiber to the Premise project which now provides speeds up to 1GB to cooperative members and to others in the Arrowhead region.

“Our agricultural, educational and health care delivery systems are all enhanced when rural people are connected. Public funding is necessary to support continued private investment to enable further broadband deployment. As we work to connect the most rural areas we need access to public funding which will provide up to \$4 of public investment for every \$1 of private investment.”



Marc Johnson

Marc Johnson is Executive Director of East Central Minnesota Educational Cable Cooperative (ECMECC), a telecommunications & technology cooperative of 14 K-12 school districts in East Central Minnesota. Marc is in his ninth year as ECMECC director having spent two years prior as technology director for ISD 15 and seven years as instructional technology specialist for the St. Croix River Education District. Previously, he taught middle and high school mathematics and college technology courses. Marc has been co-chair of the Kanabec Broadband Initiative since its inception in 2011 and continues to work with several other rural broadband initiatives in East Central Minnesota.

“Our current provider and other potential providers have told us that there is not a market case to build our rural areas – even with the assistance of a long-term, low interest loan from the county. Additional public funding to go along with a provider investment and the residential "take" seems to be our only hope of getting higher speeds.”



Chuck Novak

Chuck Novak is the current Mayor of the City of Ely, winning his most recent run on a platform of economic development with the extension of broadband to Ely as a priority in making that happen.

“Economies in rural Minnesota cannot grow businesses unless true high speed internet is available. Legislators need to get educated in what the term Broadband really means.”



Sophia Stading

My name is Sophia Stading, I am in 6th Grade and attend Lake Crystal Welcome Memorial Secondary School – Lake Crystal, MN. I am the daughter of Bryan and Tanja Stading. I have a twin sister, her name is Ava and I also have an older sister in the 9th Grade, her name is Isabella. Our family lives on an acreage in South Central Minnesota where I am involved in raising farm animals, baling hay, and assisting with chores on our farm. I spend time training and riding my POA pony “Flashy Does It” and enjoy showing him in both open and 4-H Horse Shows. I spend my spare time being active in a variety of outdoor activities including fishing, hunting and snowmobiling with my family. Activities & Clubs: 4-H – Horse, Sheep, Lamb Lead, and Flower Gardening Projects – 6 years; 6th Grade Girls Youth Basketball – 3 years; Band – 2 years; Choir – 2 years; Science Fair – 1 year; Dance – 5 years.



Sammie Garrity

Hello. My name is Sammie Garrity and I live in Lutsen, MN. I am in 6th grade, I am 11 years old and I go to school at Great Expectations School in Grand Marais. I have a mom named Linda and a crazy, furball canine named George. Some things I enjoy doing are writing, reading, drawing and playing basketball. Family is so important to me. I especially like spending time with my Mom and my dog, taking hikes or sitting on the couch and snuggling. I love all of these things. To me, life is surrounded by words, people, ideas, smells, images and color. That is just a short snippet of my life. Thank you.



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Day at a Glance

- 8:30 **Coffee w/Lt. Governor Smith**, Governor's Cabinet Room, State Capitol
- 9:00 Walk to State Office Building Room N 500
- 9:15 **Broadband Issues Legislator Panel** Representatives Layman, Garofalo, Baker, and Johnson, Senator Simonson, DEED Office of Broadband Development Director Danna MacKenzie. Moderated by Steve Kelley, Sr Fellow Humphrey School of Public Affairs.
- 10:00 **Press Conference** Hosted by Steve Fenske, Minnesota Association of Townships
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- 10:20 **Lobbying Orientation and Tips**, Amanda Duerr, MMUA and team
- 11:00 **Legislative Office Visits**
- 12:00 Box lunches available and social media activity in Room 500 N
- 1:00 **Senate Committee on Jobs and Economic Growth Finance and Policy**, Rm 1150 Senate Office Building
- 3:00 **House Committee on Job Growth and Energy Affordability Policy and Finance**, Rm 10 State Office Building
- 5:00 **Reception – Rathskeller Cafeteria**. Capitol Building