



Board of County Commissioners Agenda Request

4A
Agenda Item #

Requested Meeting Date: July 13, 2021

Title of Item: CBR Accelerate Program

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> REGULAR AGENDA <input type="checkbox"/> CONSENT AGENDA <input type="checkbox"/> INFORMATION ONLY	Action Requested: <input type="checkbox"/> Approve/Deny Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Adopt Resolution (attach draft) <i>*provide copy of hearing notice that was published</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Direction Requested <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion Item <input type="checkbox"/> Hold Public Hearing*
Submitted by: Mark Jeffers		Department: Administration
Presenter (Name and Title): Mark Jeffers, Economic Development Coordinator		Estimated Time Needed: 10 min.
Summary of Issue: Staff will present CBR Accelerate Program progress and next steps to the Board of Directors.		
Alternatives, Options, Effects on Others/Comments:		
Recommended Action/Motion: FYI		
Financial Impact: Is there a cost associated with this request? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No What is the total cost, with tax and shipping? \$ Is this budgeted? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <i>Please Explain:</i>		



CBR ACCELERATE!



ACCELERATE!
Community Broadband Resources
Aitkin, Kanabec, & Pine Counties, & Mille Lacs Tribal Economy

Connecting
Quality of Life
with Broadband

WHAT IS CBR ACCELERATE!?

Community Broadband Resources (CBR): Accelerate! Program. The program provides a 15-week cohort study and education for the community team.

The program consists of three phases:

- 1) Leadership Education*
- 2) Information Collection*
- 3) Analysis and Action Planning*

This project will also include community surveys and interviews with internet service providers, with an end goal of action and improvement in all of Aitkin County.

Broadband is an engine for growth in Aitkin County. Aitkin County has made broadband a priority by granting funds for broadband development over the last three years. Expansion and upgrade of services and infrastructure is vital to compete for economic growth.



AITKIN COUNTY CBR TEAM

**JEANIE
COLLINS**
GROWTH
INNOVATIONS

**STACY
CLUFF**
MLEC

**DAKE
OLSON**
MCGREGOR
MAYOR

**CASEY
JOHNSON**
RIVERWOOD
HEALTHCARE

**JESSICA
SEIBERT**
ADMINISTRATOR
AITKIN COUNTY

**TAYLOR
ERICKSON**
AITKIN
CHAMBER

**ROSE
BEVERLY**
CITY
ADMINISTRATOR
AITKIN

**LIN
BENSON**
CITY
COUNCIL
HILL CITY

**KATIE
NELSON**
RIVERWOOD
HEALTHCARE

**BRIAN
NAPSTAD**
COMMISSIONER,
AITKIN COUNTY

**CINDY
CHUHANIC**
AITKIN
BUSINESS
OWNER

**TAMI
MEYER**
CITY CLERK
HILL CITY

**LISA
KRUSE**
RIVERWOOD
HEALTHCARE

**LAURIE
WESTERLUND**
COMMISSIONER, AITKIN
COUNTY

**BRANDI
CAVERLY**
DEPUTY
CLERK
HILL CITY

**NICOLE
HAWKINSON**
RIVERWOOD
HEALTHCARE

**MARK
JEFFERS**
ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT
AITKIN COUNTY



AITKIN COUNTY: WHY BROADBAND?

SPEED AND RELIABILITY:

If you use streaming services (Netflix, Hulu), attend Zoom Meetings, have students using distance learning, Broadband is the only option that will give you the speed and bandwidth you need.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

Every business needs access to fast, reliable internet. As more people transition to work from home or the cabin, broadband is a necessity, not a luxury.



ACCELERATE!
Community Broadband Resources
Aitkin, Kanabec, & Pine Counties, & Mille Lacs Tribal Economy

CONNECTION TO LOVED ONES:

Family zoom parties and video chats with the grandkids are very popular in our ever changing times.

TELEMEDICINE:

As the Healthcare landscape changes dramatically, online visits with your physicians, mental health professionals and pharmacists are emerging as the new normal and saves a tremendous amount of travel time for elderly residents.



AITKIN COUNTY BROADBAND VISION

To ensure broadband access to all Aitkin County residents and visitors to support vibrant communities.



WHERE DOES OUR COUNTY STAND TODAY

Aitkin ranks 81st out of 87 Counties in the availability of high-speed Internet.

NOW THE GOOD NEWS:

- Aitkin County has many business organizations, internet providers and a great CBR Accelerate Team making Broadband access a top priority.
- Aitkin County continues to identify Broadband funding opportunities and is highly active in applying for access to these funds.
- **WE ARE WORKING ON IT TOGETHER
AND WE ARE MAKING PROGRESS!**



WHERE DOES OUR COUNTY STAND TODAY

WHAT IS RDOF:

- The Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) is an FCC initiative designed to inject billions of dollars into the construction and operation of rural broadband networks.
- RDOF held a competitive auction and awarded providers territory rights to build broadband.
- The territories went to the lowest bidder, sometimes so low that it does not make financial sense.

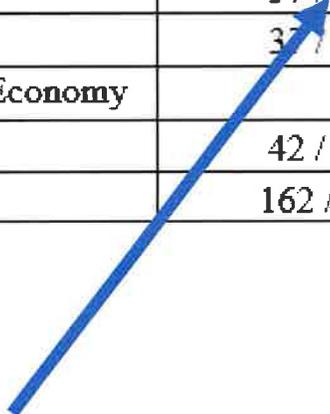
WHAT DOES THIS MEAN:

- Providers that were awarded territory have 6 years to complete the projects.
- In reality it ties the hands of local decision making.

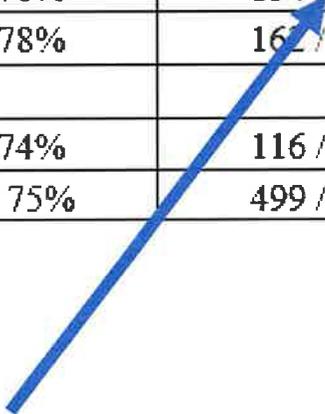


MARKET STUDY RESULTS

	I do not have Internet Service at my home.	I have Internet Service (excluding cellular phone or hotspot) at my home.	I have only cellular Internet at my home.
Aitkin County	57 / 8%	481 / 70%	154 / 22%
Kanabec County	37 / 4%	688 / 78%	162 / 18%
Mille Lacs Tribal Economy			
Pine County	42 / 7%	452 / 74%	116 / 19%
All respondents	162 / 6%	1960 / 75%	499 / 19%



8% surveyed do not have internet service



Of the 70% surveyed that do have internet service, 22% have only cellular



MARKET STUDY RESULTS

Please tell us why you do not have fixed Internet access at your home.

	No services are offered at my location	The price is too high	Other
Aitkin County	92 / 44%	27 / 13%	56

Does at least one member of the household:

	Work at home (full or part time)	Operate a home business	Attend school online (full or part time)
Aitkin County	90 / 43%	25 / 12%	41 / 19%
Kanabec County	15 / 37%	40 / 20%	54 / 27%
Mille Lacs Tribal Economy			
Pine County	60 / 38%	23 / 15%	30 / 19%
All respondents	252 / 38%	94 / 14%	143 / 22%



MARKET STUDY RESULTS

If you had internet access at this location, would you use it for: (check all that apply)?

Education (K12 - higher education)	235
Earn income (work or business)	322
Communication (email, video calls, social media)	485
Entertainment (video or music streaming, gaming)	456
Access government information	211
Cloud-based services (Dropbox, iCloud, etc.)	208
Other	32



MARKET STUDY RESULTS

In your opinion, are there sufficient Internet service provider choices available to you at your location (choose one)?

	Count	Percent
No	476	97%
Yes	17	3%
Total	493	100%

WE MUST BE
BETTER!



STUDY PARTICIPANT COMMENTS

- My wife is a transplant patient with the U of MN and we can't video conference with her doctors because of how slow our internet is.
- Absolutely ridiculous access and speed. TV's are constantly buffering. My granddaughter can't access her schooling effectively when she comes to visit. My son and daughter are currently here taking care of us due to some health issues and my son can't effectively work. Internet drop outs interrupt work and meetings. We are thinking of spending 3 times as much to get satellite but we don't see good reviews of that either.
- Both my husband and I work from our homes. We are paying for the best Internet available to us but often times we run into issues. With our children also being at home for many months due to COVID our family had challenges in having a stable connection and also at times our Internet would drop.



• Broadband access is critical for us to work consistently at our home in Aitkin (it is our second, year-round house) and we would spend much more time in Aitkin if we had superb broadband like we have in the Twin Cities.



HIGH PRIORITY STRATEGIES

1. Complete provider planned projects in 2021.
2. Community Collaboration and Education
3. Increase interaction with Providers
4. Ensure broadband access to all Aitkin County residents and visitors to support vibrant communities.



FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Local

- American Rescue Plan funds
- Local funding

State

- Border to Border Broadband Grant Program
- Small Cities Development Grant Program

Federal

- American Rescue Plan
- NTIA – Department of Commerce
- USDA



AITKIN COUNTY GRANT REQUESTS

1. NATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION ADMINISTRATION (NTIA)
 - Federal Broadband Infrastructure Program
 - Collaborating with MLEC to apply for this grant.
 - Pending approval from Board of Commissioners to apply.
 - \$7 Million project
2. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG):
 - Collaborated with MLEC to apply for this grant.
 - July decision on award is pending.
 - \$4.8 Million project.



WHAT CAN YOU DO AS A COMMUNITY TO HELP?

1. Take the speed test for our county.
2. Continue to communicate to our local providers. Let them know how important Broadband is to the success of your business.
3. Talk to your Legislative Leadership at all levels. Let them know how important Broadband is to your business.

What is your home internet speed?



The Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition is conducting a statewide crowd-sourced internet speed testing initiative.

The goal of this project is to create an accurate statewide map of where internet service is available and what speeds people are currently receiving.

TAKE THE TEST IN ONE MINUTE OR LESS!

www.mnruralbroadbandcoalition.com/speedtest



QUESTIONS & COMMENTS



THANK
YOU!

