



# Board of County Commissioners Agenda Request

**5C**  
Agenda Item #

**Requested Meeting Date:** November 14, 2023

**Title of Item:** Motion for letter of support- East Central Energy Broadband project

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| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> REGULAR AGENDA | <b>Action Requested:</b>                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Direction Requested   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CONSENT AGENDA            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approve/Deny Motion  | <input type="checkbox"/> Discussion Item   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> INFORMATION ONLY          | <input type="checkbox"/> Adopt Resolution (attach draft) | <input type="checkbox"/> Hold Public Hearing*<br><i>*provide copy of hearing notice that was published</i> |

|                                      |                                      |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <b>Submitted by:</b><br>Mark Jeffers | <b>Department:</b><br>Administration |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Presenter (Name and Title):</b><br>Mark Jeffers, Economic Development Coordinator | <b>Estimated Time Needed:</b><br>5 minutes |
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**Summary of Issue:**

The Aitkin County Economic Development Committee has received a request for a letter of support for East Central Energy's grant application to the state Border to Border Grant Program.

**Alternatives, Options, Effects on Others/Comments:**

**Recommended Action/Motion:**

Economic Development requests approval of a motion to forward a letter of support.

**Financial Impact:**

Is there a cost associated with this request?  Yes  No

What is the total cost, with tax and shipping? \$

Is this budgeted?  Yes  No *Please Explain:*



East Central Energy  
HOME GROWN, MEMBER OWNED,  
COMMUNITY FOCUSED

Rural electric co-ops are the fastest growing segment of broadband providers. East Central Energy powers some of the **most under-served counties** in the state. With the right funding, our electric grid can be leveraged to provide residential broadband and improve the overall quality of life for **over 123,000 residents**.

**64,374 MEMBERS SERVED**  
**8,473 MILES OF LINE**  
**14 COUNTIES**  
**180+ EMPLOYEES**

Headquartered in Braham, MN, East Central Energy is **Minnesota's third largest** member-owned electric cooperative.



ECE is **uniquely positioned** to deliver broadband service to rural parts of Minnesota. We already have a deep relationship with our **member-owners**, plus we maintain a longer-term view of infrastructure investments.

## What makes East Central Energy the broadband provider of choice?

### As a not-for-profit organization...

We have **87+ years** of history in solid service

As ECE did in the '30s, we intend to **serve all areas...** not just densely populated

We have strong **relationships** with communities and access to resources

Across the nation, many other co-ops have deployed broadband **successfully**

### ...a regional project makes sense

Full fiber-to-the-home is the **gold standard** for internet service

ECE has the ability to blanket our 14-county area, helping to **offset expenses**

Our existing infrastructure = potential for **smart grid** technology

Positive long-term **economic impact** for families, schools, healthcare, and businesses

To learn more, contact:

**Dennis Rice**

Broadband Manager



dennis.rice@ecemn.com



763-691-2085

# Minnesota Border-to-Border Grant Scope - Kanabec County

The Minnesota Office of Broadband has opened the FY 2024 grant window and allocated \$50M to bettering high-speed internet services throughout Minnesota. ECE will be applying for three grants, which are due on December 7, 2023. One of the three grants will directly impact Kanabec County. The Border-to-Border application awards points for community participation letters of support and financial commitment. The table below shows how much of each township/city would be served with high-speed internet if this grant is approved.

|                         | Sq Miles   | % of County |
|-------------------------|------------|-------------|
| <b>Pine Central</b>     | <b>132</b> |             |
| Kanabec County          | 67         | 12.5%       |
| Pine County             | 65         | 4.6%        |
| <b>Pine North</b>       | <b>117</b> |             |
| Pine County             | 83         | 5.8%        |
| Aitkin County           | 35         | 1.7%        |
| <b>Mille Lacs South</b> | <b>91</b>  |             |
| Isanti County           | 14         | 3.0%        |
| Mille Lacs County       | 78         | 11.4%       |
| <b>Total Kanabec</b>    | <b>148</b> |             |

## “Community Engagement” wording from the B2B grant application:

### Critical Need/Community Participation: 0 to 15 points possible

Addition scoring points will be awarded for the following:

- Project applications must identify why there is a critical need for the proposed project as it relates to access, affordability, reliability and/or consistency (in addition to being a scoring factor, applicants that do not address the critical need for their project may be disqualified from consideration)
- **Verified financial commitment to the project from any qualified community partner(s) [Community partner may be any public, private, non-profit, or philanthropic entity – this would include a business, county, township, city, tribal entity, or community coalition]**
- Projects that propose to serve or partially serve federally recognized tribal lands, and the associated tribal entity has provided application documentation of project support
- **Project applications that provide substantive evidence of community support for the project**

# MN Border-to-Border Round 9 Grant Scope - Township Breakdown

| Pine Central           |            |               |             |            |                      |
|------------------------|------------|---------------|-------------|------------|----------------------|
| Townships              | Sq Miles   | % of Township | Underserved | Unserved   | Total Service Points |
| <b>Kanabec County</b>  |            |               |             |            |                      |
| Kroschel Township      | 8.7        | 24%           | 13          | 31         | 44                   |
| Peace Township         | 19.8       | 52%           | 56          | 186        | 242                  |
| Pomroy Township        | 37.1       | 98%           | 54          | 182        | 236                  |
| Whited Township        | 0.8        | 3%            | -           | 6          | 6                    |
| <b>Pine County</b>     |            |               |             |            |                      |
| Brook Park City        | 1.0        | 100%          | 13          | 58         | 71                   |
| Brook Park Township    | 20.6       | 69%           | 23          | 136        | 159                  |
| Hinckley Township      | 23.9       | 67%           | 77          | 181        | 258                  |
| Mission Creek Township | 19.2       | 60%           | 35          | 119        | 154                  |
| Pokegama Township      | 0.7        | 1%            | -           | 8          | 8                    |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>132</b> | <b>-</b>      | <b>271</b>  | <b>907</b> | <b>1,178</b>         |



## AITKIN COUNTY ADMINISTRATION

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Aitkin County Government Center  
307 2<sup>nd</sup> Street NW, Room 316  
Aitkin, MN 56431

November 14, 2023

East Central Energy  
ATTN: ECE Board of Directors  
412 Main Avenue North  
Braham, MN. 55006

RE: ECE Letter of Support

Aitkin County would like to express our support for East Central Energy's Broadband Project for the MN Border-to-Border Round 9 grant program.

ECE's efforts will provide access to high-speed internet for many of our community members that currently do not have adequate internet access, or no internet access at all. These residents currently struggle with slow internet speed and poor connectivity—some residents have NO access to broadband—which adversely impacts school, work, and healthcare for these families.

This grant opportunity would greatly improve the quality of life for Aitkin County residents. Improving broadband to our residents in one of our highest priorities in Aitkin County. Currently, Aitkin County is 74<sup>th</sup> out of 87 counties for broadband access to under-served or un-served residents.

Aitkin County strongly supports this project and would appreciate your consideration of ECE's MN Border-to-Border Round 9 grant application.

Thank you for your consideration,

J Mark Wedel  
County Commissioner, Board Chair  
Aitkin County