



## 5. Regional Broadband Discussion – Who is doing what?

- Joel Z. with Washburn County noted that once we began to endure the pandemic, he sent weekly letters to the Governor's Office regarding broadband and the challenges being faced – he stated that he has been in many conversations with the PSC he is hopeful that improvements will be made to the Broadband Expansion Grants that will serve our rural areas in the future.
- Kelly K. with Iron County stated that the broadband committee that they formed back in 2012 has guided much progress as it relates to broadband throughout the county over the past several years. They are fortunate to have a local, engaged, fixed wireless provider that has implemented 12 towers, serving most parts of Iron County. He noted that they saw about a 40% increase in usage in the county in March. Iron County is looking forward to the results of the NWRPC/EDA Internet survey to help to identify gaps, learn more about remote work/telecommuting and the economic impacts, and what their residents are interested in learning more about as it relates to technology. He noted that they will be looking to increase bandwidth on the towers as a result of the increased usage in the county.
- Cole R. with Bayfield County stated that Spectrum blocked efforts of two recent grant applications that could have potentially benefitted the county from moving forward. He noted that the county and many communities have been supportive, providing financial assistance and finding locations for towers, etc. Norvado provides service to 80% of the county – they have completed their buildout well ahead of schedule. They have also extended fiber services into Price County. He also noted that Norvado offered affordable Internet to households with K-12 students as a result of the pandemic.
- Jessica W-S. commented that Sawyer County was recently designated as Telecommuter Forward! The county was denied for the recent WEDC Broadband Connector Pilot.
- None of the counties in the region were selected for the WEDC Broadband Connector Pilot project per the discussion at the meeting. Many applied to the program.
- Dick H. in Burnett County stated that he has had many meetings with local providers and there are currently Telecommuter Forward conversations happening. Local providers have been working on building out fiber to some of the remote areas, including campgrounds, etc. BCDA is in the process of developing a survey to assess impact on telecommuter work occurring due to the high volume of second homes in the area.
- Andy A. in Rusk County noted that they have some board members expressing interest in continuing broadband discussions after taking a couple of years off from tackling the issue (due to continued lack of progress). He stated that most of the west side of the county is built out, while the other side is serviced by CenturyLink which continues to be a hard provider to work with. They are going to start forming some roundtable discussions between schools, businesses, etc. in the near future.

## 6. Around the (Virtual) Table – Other Business

- Kelly K. spoke about his experience on the Northwoods Rail Transit Commission. In March, a legislative summit was held in Rhinelander and as a follow-up, legislators contacted Canadian National Railway (CN) encouraging them to find solutions to get some of the light density lines back in operation. As a result, CN plans to divest 625 miles of rail line (mostly in Northern WI)– they are currently in the process of developing the RFP. They hope to finish by next Summer.
- John W. reminded the group about the broadband installer/technician program they have at WITC. He stated that they are at about 90% of their enrollment compared to last year.
- Jenice M. stated that things at UW-Superior are going well overall – student are on-campus as much as possible and feel safe in the current environment due to the safety precautions that have been taken.

## 7. Confirm Next Meeting– January 13, 2021 10AM to 12PM – Location or virtual TBD

8. **Adjourn** – A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Joel Z., second by Cole R. at 12:00PM.