



The Honorable Governor Tim Walz
The Honorable Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan
Senate Majority Leader Jeremy Miller
Speaker of the House Melissa Hortman
Senate Minority Leader Melisa Lopez Franzen
House Minority Leader Kurt Daudt

Dear Leaders:

I'm writing on behalf of the MRC membership to urge you to allocate the remaining \$110 million from the American Rescue Plan Act's Capitol Projects Fund to the state's Border-to-Border Broadband Infrastructure Grant Program.

Linking unserved and underserved areas of the state to broadband connections that meet or exceed state speed goals is a perennial priority with MRC, and our membership believes these funds are best used to connect the remaining hundreds of thousands of Minnesota households that lack adequate broadband.

We learned from Office of Broadband Development testimony on February 23rd that the Administration intends to use these funds for projects not related to the Border-to-Border Grant Program. This would include money for devices like laptops or tablets as well as community facility projects like constructing or improving libraries and community schools.

The pandemic illustrated the stark inequities between those with adequate broadband connection and those without. Students should not need to rely on public libraries or borrowed wi-fi connections to complete their assignments, and a tablet is rendered useless for the purposes of education if students cannot access the internet in their home. Additionally, and importantly federal funding for digital equity projects will soon be on its way to the state through programs in the Infrastructure, Investment, and Jobs Act that was approved in 2021.

We are grateful for the strong emphasis the legislature has placed on funding the grant program in recent years and for the progress it has provided toward completion, but there is much left to do. More than ever, we need urge you to keep the focus on bringing world-class, highspeed broadband internet to people where they live.

MRC reiterates the request that you allocate the remaining \$110 million in the Capital Projects Fund to the state Border-to-Border Broadband Grant Program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Luke Johnson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Luke Johnson
MRC Chairman
Pipestone County Commissioner

CC: Commissioner Steve Grove, Sen. Torrey Westrom, Sen. Julie Rosen, Sen. Tom Bakk, Rep. Rob Ecklund, Rep. Rena Moran, Rep. Gene Pelowski, Angie Dickison, Beth Binczik