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BROADBAND EXPANSION WOULD SPUR MINNESOTA ECONOMIC, QUALITY-OF-LIFE OPPORTUNITIES

Task Force Report Offers Roadmap to Broadband Leadership

Saint Paul, Minn. (Nov. 6, 2009) – Expanding and improving Minnesota’s broadband speed and access to achieve national and global leadership will be an engine for the state’s economic growth and increased quality-of-life opportunities, according to a report and recommendations released today by the Minnesota Ultra High-Speed Broadband Task Force.

The report, titled “Minnesota’s Ultra High-Speed Broadband Report,” was released today at a news conference at the Sate Capitol. The Task Force’s key recommendations include the following:

- High-speed broadband should reach all Minnesotans as soon as possible, but no later than 2015.
- High-speed broadband should achieve speeds of 10 to 20 Megabits per second (Mbps) for downloads and 5 to 10 Mbps for uploads as a baseline speed by 2015.
- State policies should encourage high-speed broadband development through tax incentives and public-private collaborations aimed at individuals, businesses and internet providers.

The Task Force was created by the legislature in 2008 and charged with establishing a statewide high-speed internet access goal and plan for implanting those recommendations by 2015. The 23-member task force includes representatives from business, non-profits, government and the public. It is chaired by Rick King, Chief Technology Officer for Thomson Reuters Legal based in Eagan.

“Broadband Internet is the next generation of economic and quality-of-life infrastructure investment, like rural electrification and highways were for previous generations,” said King. “Studies have shown that every \$1 invested in broadband expansion creates at least \$10 in economic growth.”

Expanded broadband access has the potential to create or save between 1 million and 2.5 million jobs nationwide in the near future, according to recent studies. Minnesota’s growing knowledge and service industries now represent 80 percent of Minnesota’s economy.

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To achieve this economic growth, the report recommends that Minnesota's measure of success should be national and global leadership:

- In the top 5 states of the United States for overall speed.
- In the top 5 states for broadband access.
- In the top 15 globally for broadband access.

"Minnesota's rank on these and other benchmarks are only important to measure the state's progress in providing statewide, high-speed access," said King. "The technology is only a means to an end. The goal is to create new jobs and economic opportunities for Minnesotans -- to assure that Minnesota businesses, wherever they are located in the state, are able to compete in the global marketplace -- and to deliver education, health, government and other services to all citizens more efficiently and cost effectively."

Currently, only Washington County has achieved the download and upload speeds recommended in the report. At the same time, broadband is only available to 37 percent of Cook County residents. In Greater Minnesota, 11 counties have available download speeds of 1.5 Mbps or less, far below the speeds needed to access contemporary online technologies.

"By 2015, all Minnesotans should have access to Internet service that is at least 10 to 20 Mbps, or about 15 times the speed available to most Minnesotans today. In fact, this is the floor; we believe that by starting down this path today, we are creating the opportunity for many Minnesotans to have speeds that will be tens, if not hundreds, of times faster in 2015."

To achieve these goals, the Ultra High-Speed Broadband Task Force recommends the state create a "Broadband Advisory Council for Minnesota" to oversee implementation of the report's recommendations. The Task Force also recommends that this council work to guide collaborations between local governments, business, nonprofits, technology providers and other stakeholders in order to encourage collaboration between partners and across communities.

The report also recommends that the legislature develop tax credits to encourage individuals, businesses and others to increase their broadband usage, and outlines opportunities for enhanced security of existing broadband infrastructure.

The Ultra High-Speed Broadband Task Force reached their recommendations following more than a year of intensive study and 18 hearings of expert testimony, including outreach meetings in Fergus Falls, Mankato and Grand Rapids. The report fulfills the Task Force's mission of providing the Governor and Legislature with actionable goals for expanding the state's broadband internet access by 2015.

For more information about the Ultra High-Speed Broadband Taskforce or to view their full report, visit www.ultra-high-speed-mn.org.

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About the Minnesota Ultra High-Speed Broadband Task Force. The Task Force is comprised of 23 members from across Minnesota representing a variety of perspectives on broadband expansion and use, including representatives of business, health care, education, municipal and county governments, telecommunications industries and concerned citizens statewide. Both rural and urban perspectives were represented on the Task Force, which was created by the Minnesota Legislature in April 2008.