



October 14, 2019

Rural Broadband Task Force
PO Box 95405
Lincoln, NE 68509-5045

RE: Comments on Rural Broadband Task Force's Findings & Recommendations

Task Force Members –

We appreciate the efforts of Senator Friesen in raising the issue of availability of broadband to rural consumers with the introduction and the Legislature's passage of LB 994. In addition, we extend our appreciation on the hard work of the Rural Broadband Task force in discussing and ultimately developing various recommendations to enhance the availability, adoption and affordability of broadband. On behalf of the members of the Nebraska Corn Growers Association (NeCGA), we submit these further comments.

As farmers continue the adoption of precision technology, the availability of not only broadband, but also high-speed broadband is imperative. This access allows communication of larger precision maps and prescriptive field information between farmers and their consultants to be more efficient and timely. Farmers in signing up for and verifying production information for various government programs also utilize this information – thus access to broadband is necessary. In addition, as technology on implements increases, having access to broadband for diagnostics between technicians and the implement is required.

NeCGA concurs with the recommendation of finding alternate mapping information that better depicts actual broadband access per household. Mapping on a census block basis, especially as the blocks get larger in rural areas, does not truly represent access to every household.

NeCGA supports a minimum definition of broadband of at least 25 Mbps download / 3 Mbps upload. This should be the minimum for internet service providers to access funding available from various public sources.

As technologies within internet service companies continue to develop, so too does technology within other sources of internet access. NeCGA supports opportunities of partnerships and collaborations that leverage available public and private technologies that will allow broadband access to rural households – especially that last household – which at times can be the most expensive. These partnerships and collaborations may include, but not limited to, technologies from mobile carriers, dark fiber access, satellites, education, public libraries, communities, etc.

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Finally, continued expansion of rural broadband partially revolves around the universal service fund (USF). NeCGA appreciates the efforts of the Public Service Commission (PSC) moving to a grant like process that includes reimbursement following build out of the infrastructure. NeCGA believes that stabilizing the funding and availability of such funding should continue to be a priority.

In closing, NeCGA provides these comments to support and strengthen the access for our members and farmers across the state. Providing affordable broadband access to every household is one of many priorities that NeCGA is engaged on and appreciate the efforts of the Legislature, PSC and the task force.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Dan Nerud".

Dan Nerud, President