



July 28, 2009

Honorable Tim Pawlenty
Governor of Minnesota
130 State Capitol
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Broadband Mapping Under ARRA

Dear Governor Pawlenty,

Under the State Broadband and Development Grant Program, the Governor's Office must designate an entity to conduct a broadband mapping project for the State of Minnesota with data that will be used to create a national broadband map. The grant program is funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and will be administered by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) within the U.S. Department of Commerce.

The Minnesota Departments of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) and Commerce worked closely together during this process. The recommendation reflects the viewpoints of both DEED Commissioner Dan McElroy and Commerce Commissioner Glenn Wilson.

It is anticipated each state will receive a grant for this project in the range of \$1.9 to \$3.8 million with an additional \$500,000 available per state for mapping planning projects. Applications are due no later than August 14, 2009.

The Minnesota Departments of Commerce and Employment and Economic Development are aware of two parties that are interested in Minnesota's mapping project: Connected Nation and the University of Minnesota. It is our strong recommendation the Governor select Connected Nation as Minnesota's designated entity to submit an application to perform broadband mapping for Minnesota. Connected Nation would then include in its application to the NTIA a letter from your office confirming that they are the single eligible entity that has been designated by Minnesota to receive a grant under this program.

As you are aware, the Department of Commerce just completed a contract with Connected Nation to map broadband in the state under legislation that required us to select a nonprofit entity to perform the mapping. That project came in on time and within budget. The maps have been posted on the website www.connectmn.org since February 2009 and updated through the end of the contract in June 2009. As part of our recommendation, we would hope DEED, Commerce and Connected Nation work to determine a way to use the expertise of Minnesota's new Geospatial Information Office (GIS).

We have been very satisfied with the product Connected Nation has provided and the working relationships established and expect those would continue in the future.


The other primary reason that we are recommending Connected Nation is that in conversations with and letters from the broadband provider community (including the Minnesota Telecom Association, the Minnesota Cable Communications Association, Qwest and Comcast), they have noted their satisfaction with the work Connected Nation has done, the professionalism displayed. Most important, the providers have confidence in Connected Nation's ability to protect their sensitive, nonpublic infrastructure information.

While we understand the importance of the University to the State of Minnesota, there is some uncertainty regarding their proposal. First, the University indicates that it has entered into confidentiality agreements on other projects. However, in speaking with the provider community, it is unclear whether they would be able to reach agreement with the University on nondisclosure agreements (NDAs) in order to turn their infrastructure data over to the University. Even if discussions were eventually successful, it is likely to take a significant amount of time to reach the point of having signed nondisclosure agreements with all of the approximately 110 broadband providers in the state. Second, the NTIA is also requesting that a substantially complete set of broadband availability data be submitted by November 1, 2009. Given that the University would have to negotiate NDAs with all of the providers, and then work with those same providers to get the data in a format useable by the University, it is questionable whether the deadline could be met.

The recently concluded mapping process has resulted in maps that applicants for broadband projects in Minnesota can and will be relying on to apply for funding in the first round of NTIA infrastructure grants. It would be in the best interest of the State of Minnesota to affirm the process and the broadband maps that have already been established by selecting Connected Nation to be Minnesota's designated entity and to submit a mapping and mapping planning proposal for the state by the August 14, 2009 deadline.

If you have any questions or would like to meet to discuss in more detail, please do not hesitate to call.

Sincerely,


Glenn Wilson
COMMISSIONER

c: Dan McElroy, Commissioner, DEED