



March 23, 2010

Mayor Don Ness  
City of Duluth  
411 W First Street, Room 403  
Duluth, MN 55802

Dear Mayor Ness,

On behalf of Blandin Foundation, I am pleased to be writing you today in support of the Twin Ports' effort to win a Google Fiber network.

Located about 70 miles west of Duluth, Blandin Foundation is Minnesota's largest rural based and rural focused foundation, and our mission is to strengthen communities in rural Minnesota, especially the Grand Rapids area. We believe that access to and use of broadband is critical to economic development efforts throughout the state, and thus, in 2003 we established our Broadband Initiative. The guiding vision of this work is well aligned with Google's fiber network project:

*To ensure a high quality of life and a globally competitive future for its citizens, businesses and communities, Minnesota is committed to making the necessary investment to become a world leader in the universal deployment and use of ultra high-speed next generation broadband.*

While the Foundation does not invest directly in telecommunications infrastructure, we do work in partnership with others to increase awareness about the value of broadband, business and residential broadband use, and public and private investment in broadband capacity. *(For more information, visit [www.broadband.blandinfoundation.org](http://www.broadband.blandinfoundation.org).)* We are excited about the potential impacts that a Google Fiber network in the Twin Ports would have for leveraging the Foundation's considerable investments in maximizing the benefits of robust broadband networks for the rural communities we serve.

In August of 2009, the Foundation submitted an application to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration for \$4.7 million of federal stimulus funding through Broadband Technology Opportunities Program for sustainable broadband adoption. The project, Minnesota Intelligent Rural Communities (MIRC), creates a coalition of state and county agencies, state colleges and universities, rural communities and others to increase broadband adoption, job growth, and wealth creation. Our application is currently in the due diligence phase and we have been promised a final answer on funding by the end of this month.

Should MIRC be funded (and even if it isn't), Blandin Foundation is prepared to be an active partner to help leverage Google's investment in the Twin Ports by increasing awareness and educating people about the value of fiber networks and ultra high-speed broadband based applications. Here in Grand Rapids, we are fortunate to be a fiber-to-the-home community ourselves, and have first-hand knowledge of the benefits robust networks bring. We believe that if Google were to choose the Twin Ports as a fiber demonstration community, our entire region would rise to the challenge and heavily promote the benefits of robust broadband networks throughout the region and the state, encouraging further investment in telecommunications in Minnesota.

Sincerely,

Jim Hoolihan  
President