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## Remarks to Governor's Task Force on Broadband

### July 16, 2012 By Dr. Fred Nolan, Executive Director MREA

MREA is an association of 150 Greater MN school districts' school boards, teachers, and administrators which puts the education, growth, and development of learners first to bring about our best possible future. [www.mnrea.org](http://www.mnrea.org)

1. Broad Band connectivity is the transformational transportation infrastructure of the 21<sup>st</sup> century similar to the railroads of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the Interstate highways of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
2. In education the transformation at the K-12 level is blended education: a mixture of F2F communications and on-line-digital presentations, communications and assessment. Examples include:
  - a. Electronic submission of student work and communications with parents and students
  - b. MN MDE Science test
  - c. Flipped classrooms
  - d. Potential for "four day weeks" for secondary students with greater teacher collaborative planning and students' digital learning.
3. The issues are how to bring this about with adequacy and equity of access to provide all students Minnesota's constitutionally guaranteed education. Examples of non-equity:
  - a. One rural district has only 10 megs of access for the entire district (up from 5 megs a year ago). The Sup told me she has to shut all other internet use down during the science testing window and even then the system crashes.
  - b. Many districts report that students have little or no access as soon as they leave the school house door.
4. Policy recommendations to increase adequacy and insure equity based on previous models of transportation infrastructure development:
  - a. Standardize connectivity access standards (similar to standardization of rail width, and interstate road specs) for providers of telcom service in MN. Telcoms are regulated by the MN PUC.
    - i. Start with minimum connectivity for public service providers such as schools, hospitals, fire stations, city halls, libraries.
    - ii. Expand to minimum connectivity standards for homes.
  - b. Develop public-private partnerships similar to the land grants to transcontinental railroads to develop markets for home broad band connectivity. Perhaps a state cost-share based on Free and Reduced Lunch qualification standards for families with children.
  - c. Support R&D at the university level into alternate deliveries of connectivity to homes other than DSL and cable to address the scarcity of rural locations, similar to the medical devices research at the UofM.