



broadband association of north dakota

BAND Together Newsletter

Executive Director Report: BAND Summer Conference 2026 - Advancing North Dakota's Broadband Leadership

Soon after Americans marked the nation's 250th birthday on July 4, BAND members traveled from all corners of the state to Bismarck for the BAND Summer Conference. It is always a pleasure to see our members, reconnect, and learn from one another.

The conference kicked off with **Seth Arndorfer, CEO of Dakota Carrier Network (DCN)**, who shared an update on the **Heartland Fiber Project**. In May 2026, DCN, Range, and WIN Technology announced a joint \$700M investment in this initiative—a new approximately 2,000-mile long-haul fiber route spanning seven states (Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, North Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Illinois) and linking the Denver and Chicago markets. The project will deliver high-capacity, resilient transport that benefits industry, education, healthcare, government, and citizens while helping the region compete for development and meet surging bandwidth demands. DCN is central to ensuring North Dakota and the broader heartland remain competitive.



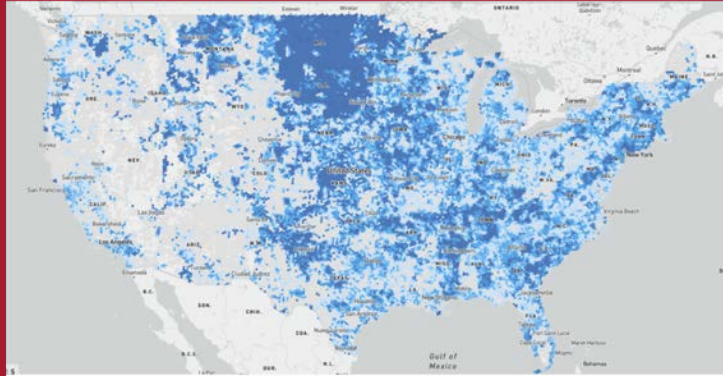
Carissa Swenson, BAND Executive Director
and
U.S. Senator Kevin Cramer

We also heard from **Terry Effertz of TechND** about the Infrastructure Coalition and were inspired by keynote speaker **Meridith Elliott Powell**. We wrapped up the first day with remarks from **U.S. Senator Kevin Cramer**, a longstanding champion of our members and the rural broadband industry, followed by a PAC appreciation dessert cruise aboard the Lewis & Clark Riverboat.

The second day focused on the issues shaping our industry. Sessions covered regulatory and political updates from Washington, D.C., the economic outlook, consumer scam awareness, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and customer service. These conversations matter because our industry continues to evolve rapidly—driven in part by increasing workloads, middle-mile needs, and rising expectations for reliability—and staying informed helps ensure our members are prepared for whatever comes next.

BAND and its member companies take great pride in bringing high-speed fiber connectivity to North Dakotans. North Dakota is widely recognized as one of the most connected states in the nation. Yet it takes more than putting fiber in the ground to build lasting relationships with our customers. It takes a commitment to continuous learning, adapting to new technologies, and finding better ways to serve the communities that depend on us every day. Conferences like this give our members the opportunity to do just that.

Thank you to everyone who took time out of a busy summer to attend, share ideas, and invest in their own professional growth. Your commitment to learning and improving is one of the reasons North Dakota continues to lead the nation in rural broadband connectivity.



More than 40% of US households are serviceable for fiber internet, according to the most recent FCC data. Service areas from all fiber providers are shown in the map above.

BAND Member Spotlight: RTC



Fiber to the Frontier: How RTC's Network Powers Medora's Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library

Medora, North Dakota—a Badlands community of 100+ permanent residents that swells each summer with seasonal workers and visitors—is now home to the **Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library**. The nearly 100,000-square-foot, \$450M facility opened to the public on July 4, 2026, as part of America's 250th anniversary celebrations. **President Donald Trump** dedicated the library in early July, joined by **Governor Kelly Armstrong** and other dignitaries.

The library sits within the service area of BAND member **RTC Networks**, a rural cooperative founded in 1951 that provides broadband service to over 14,600 members across 9,000 square miles in western North Dakota and portions of eastern Montana. RTC Networks operates roughly 6,000 miles of fiber and delivers speeds up to 10 Gigabit for business customers.

Medora's economy depends heavily on tourism. **Theodore Roosevelt National Park**, which borders the town, has drawn more than 700,000 visitors in recent years, while the long-running **Medora Musical** has welcomed over five million guests since 1965. Lodging, restaurants, and attractions must meet modern visitor expectations for reliable, high-speed internet. RTC Networks' extensive fiber network—reaching all Medora homes and businesses—makes that possible.



For the new presidential library itself, RTC Networks delivers two dedicated 10-Gigabit connections. These connections promote redundancy and resiliency while supporting the facility's advanced AI-guided experiences (including interactive conversations with a digital Theodore Roosevelt avatar developed in partnership with **Microsoft's AI for Good Lab** and the **Theodore Roosevelt Center at Dickinson State University**) as well as state-of-the-art security systems and cameras. The network's reliability met the stringent requirements for a presidential visit during the grand opening.

"Medora is a town that long ago attracted Theodore Roosevelt and now welcomes visitors from around the world," said **Shane Hart, CEO and General Manager of RTC Networks**.

Clarence Sitter, CEO for the **Theodore Roosevelt Medora Foundation** and **Medora City Council Member**, commented: "Medora has always been a place where people come to connect – with the Badlands, with Theodore Roosevelt's legacy, and with one another. From our historic roots to modern-

day tourism, Medora depends upon reliable connectivity. As we welcome visitors from across the nation and around the world to experiences like the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library, the Medora Musical, Bully Pulpit Golf Course, and the Theodore Roosevelt National Park, reliable broadband infrastructure has become as essential as roads, utilities, and public spaces. RTC Networks' investment in connectivity helps ensure that our community can deliver world-class visitor experiences, support local businesses, and continue showcasing the best of North Dakota to future generations."



The high-capacity fiber networks that BAND members such as RTC Networks build—through private investment combined with support from the **Universal Service Fund**—continue to strengthen North Dakota's rural economic viability, enabling everything from everyday business operations to world-class cultural destinations in some of the state's most remote communities.

Learn more about RTC Networks at myrtcnetworks.com and on the **BAND membership page**. Visit the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library at trlibrary.com.

Upcoming Events

Nov. 30-Dec. 2

BAND's Annual Meeting (Bismarck, ND)



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**Carissa Swenson,
Executive Director**

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