



broadband association of north dakota

BAND Together Newsletter

Executive Director Report: Connecting North Dakota is Important to ALL Americans

North Dakota is a special place. As someone who wasn't born and raised here but has called this state home for 25 years, I can say North Dakota is often underrated. For a state of about **800,000 people**—47th in the nation by population—we play an outsized role in providing the food, energy, and national defense our country depends on because of the high-speed fiber internet connections BAND members provide. The **SRT Member Spotlight** highlights how this important message was shared and experienced firsthand with **FCC Commissioner Olivia Trusty** when she toured SRTs service area.



BAND Executive Director Carissa Swenson, FCC Commissioner Olivia Trusty and SRT CEO & General Manager Cassidy Hjelmstad

North Dakota produces far more energy than we consume. In fact, our total energy production is about six times greater than our consumption. We are the nation's third-largest crude oil producer, at nearly 1.2M barrels a day, and a major supplier of natural gas and coal. That means the oil, natural gas, and coal **produced here** are helping keep homes and businesses across the country cool in the summer and warm in the winter.

The same is true for agriculture. Our farmers and ranchers produce far more food than our state could ever consume. North Dakota is the country's ninth-largest agricultural exporting state, shipping about \$5.4B in farm products abroad. We lead the nation in wheat, canola and honey, and we export soybeans, corn, beef and many other commodities. We also manufacture tractors and farm equipment used by farmers across the country and around the world.

You've heard me say it before, and I'll say it again: North Dakota is the most connected state in the nation when it comes to fiber optic broadband. That didn't happen by accident, and it wouldn't have happened without the **Universal Service Fund**.

Universal Service was created to ensure that all Americans, no matter where they live, have access to comparable, reliable and affordable communications services. Today, that same principle helps make it possible to build, maintain and operate the high-speed broadband networks that connect rural North Dakota to the rest of the world.

More than 95% of North Dakota households can get at least 100 Mbps service, and about 70% can reach gigabit speeds.

The state is on track to become the first in the nation with fiber available to every home and business. **Universal Service** support for North Dakota allows for the ongoing investment that keeps those networks working and rates affordable.

Because broadband connectivity isn't separate from the other things North Dakota provides. It supports them.

BAND TOGETHER NEWSLETTER • SOURCE: ND.GOV / NDIT

ND ON TRACK TO BECOME THE FIRST STATE WITH 100% BROADBAND

High-speed fiber to every home and business

95%+
of households can
get 100 Mbps

70%+
can reach
gigabit speeds

2028
or sooner —
fiber at every location

FIRST IN THE NATION • UNIVERSAL HIGH-SPEED FIBER



Capital Projects Fund: grants
awarded for nearly 3,000 locations



Final 279 awards going to
North Dakota companies

NTIA data cited by North Dakota Information Technology • Dec. 1, 2025 announcement
BEAD plan approved, unlocking remaining rural gaps. Decades of provider investment made this possible.

Prepared for the Broadband Association of North Dakota • broadbandnd.com

It connects our farms and ranches, our energy producers, our businesses, our communities and our national defense installations. It allows rural North Dakotans to live and work in the communities they love while continuing to produce the food, energy and other resources our country relies on.

That is why **Universal Service** funding in North Dakota isn't just important to North Dakotans. It is important to all Americans. When we invest in connecting rural North Dakota, we are investing in our nation.

BAND Member Spotlight: SRT



SRT's Day with FCC Commissioner Olivia Trusty

On August 13, 2026, [FCC Commissioner Olivia Britt Trusty](#) spent a [full day in Minot with SRT](#) Communications, North Dakota's largest telecommunications cooperative. What began as a familiarization visit became one of the clearest demonstrations yet of why rural fiber networks matter far beyond the communities they serve.

The morning started at **Minot Air Force Base**. Commissioner Trusty received a **Combined Mission Briefing** from the commander of the **5th Bomb Wing** and the deputy commander of the **91st Missile Wing**. She toured base facilities, including gaining an understanding how fiber infrastructure connects the installation and asked detailed questions about the future of connectivity as it pertains to the missions.



That afternoon SRT shifted the focus from national defense to the full picture of its network. [CEO/General Manager Cassidy Hjelmstad](#) and her team presented the cooperative's 75-

year story: 5,587 square miles of service territory, more than 9,200 miles of fiber and more than 27,000 customers. They showed geographically diverse upstream routes, and a fiber platform already delivering multi-gigabit service with a clear path to 25 and 50 gigabit. They also walked the Commissioner through SRT's role as the fiber provider at the **Logistics Park of North Dakota**—home to **AGT Foods** and a growing intermodal hub that expands export capacity for regional producers.

The conversation repeatedly returned to three intertwined pillars that define Minot and much of rural North Dakota: protect, power, and provide for. When the discussion turned to the [Universal Service Fund](#), Commissioner Trusty observed that support for North Dakota's networks does not simply help North Dakotans; it helps the entire nation.

SRT's experience with Commissioner Trusty is a reminder of the value of direct engagement. When policymakers see the full scope of what rural networks actually serve—from national defense to barley fields—the policy case for robust, predictable support becomes self-evident.



Community Resiliency Roundtable

Pictured: Scott Senger, SRT; Jesse Kettman, SRT; Chris Van Gels, Trinity Hospital; Minot Police Chief Michael Frye; FCC Commissioner Trusty; Cassidy Hjelmstad, SRT; Brekka Kramer, MACEDC; Kevin Harmon, MSU

Upcoming Events

Oct. 14

BAND/DCN Educational Workshop (Fargo, ND)

Oct. 15

BAND/DCN Educational Workshop (Grand Forks, ND)

Oct. 15

DRN Annual Meeting (Ellendale, ND)

Oct. 21

BAND/DCN Educational Workshop (Bismarck, ND)

Nov. 30-Dec. 2

BAND's Annual Meeting (Bismarck, ND)



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**Carissa Swenson,
Executive Director**

I am happy to provide information or speak at an event. If you aren't already subscribed to this newsletter, [please join our mailing list.](#)



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