



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition Launches Statewide Speed Test Initiative

Saint Paul, MN - **"The Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition is pleased to announce the launch of the Minnesota Speed Test Initiative,"** said Vince Robinson, Chair of the MN Rural Broadband Coalition. "There is no doubt that the lack of broadband in rural Minnesota hampers telework, distance learning, and telehealth. Our goal is to find out exactly where broadband service is available in rural Minnesota and what speeds people are receiving."

TAKE THE TEST: <http://mnruralbroadbandcoalition.com/speedtest>

A pilot program for speed testing is ongoing in St Louis, Koochiching, and Itasca Counties. The Range Association of Municipalities and Schools has been leading the way to create a different set of broadband maps based on approximately 7,000 broadband speed tests submitted by area residents and businesses.

These speed tests, mapped by GEO Partners, clearly show the speeds available in cities and townships across the three northern Minnesota counties.

"For years we've been relying on incomplete data to make big decisions on broadband infrastructure in Minnesota," said Nathan Zacharias, Project Manager for the Minnesota Speed Test Initiative. "Most broadband maps stop at the census block, township, or county level. The Minnesota Speed Test Initiative will give us house-by-house data that just isn't available anywhere else. We're very excited to get this project in the field."

The speed test can be taken with any device that has an internet or cellular connection and takes less than one minute to complete. No personal information will be collected. Testing data will be statistically valid and provide a map of what service levels are for any given area in the state. This information will be an important tool for communities that are planning a broadband expansion project through the FCC, USDA, or MN Border-to-Border Broadband Grant Program.

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COVID-19 has shown us how important access to broadband is for every Minnesotan now that we're being asked to work, learn, or receive care from home. Broadband is no different than any other basic utility that people need. It is an essential part of our daily lives.

The Minnesota Speed Test Initiative has been made possible by:

- The Blandin Foundation
- Minnesota Initiative Foundations
- Best Buy
- Mardag Foundation
- Range Association of Municipalities & Schools
- Minnesota Power
- ICS
- Mining Minnesota

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ABOUT THE MINNESOTA RURAL BROADBAND COALITION

The Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition is a membership group of local units of government, economic development agencies, agriculture groups, educational institutions, healthcare organizations, telecommunications organizations, non-profits, and individuals who advocate for better broadband in rural Minnesota. Our vision is that everyone in Minnesota will be able to use convenient, affordable world-class broadband networks that enable us to survive and thrive in our communities and across the globe. For more information visit www.mnbroadbandcoalition.com and follow us on Twitter @broadband_rural.