

March 27, 2025

U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

RE: BEAD and DO Implementation

Dear Secretary Lutnick:

Show Me Broadband is a coalition of Missouri's farmers, municipalities, elected officials, internet service providers, realtors, financial institutions, libraries, nonprofits, and regional development organizations.

We come from different backgrounds but are united by the belief that every Missourian should have access to fast, reliable, affordable internet service. We are closer now to this goal than we have ever been, and we need your help!

Thanks to \$1.7 billion awarded to Missouri through the National Telecommunications and Information Administration's (NTIA) Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) program, our most disconnected communities will finally receive the fast, reliable and affordable broadband service they need and deserve.

After three years of preparation, with the input of everyone across the state, the Missouri Office of Broadband (OBD) is now beginning to close in on the final stages of awarding the funds to serve every Missourian, through both the BEAD and Digital Opportunity programs. And, so far, it is going well. The states that have finished their BEAD process—Louisiana, Nevada and Delaware—have achieved a high percentage of fiber while still incorporating wireless and satellite technologies where needed.

Missouri is about to achieve similar success. There are approximately 200,000 unserved locations in Missouri and the first call for applications resulted in receiving applications for 90% of these unserved locations. All applications were fiber based and OBD plans to include other forms of technology where necessary to ensure that every Missourian has access to high-quality and affordable service.

For the Digital Opportunity (DO) program, the Missouri OBD has developed a plan to address the full range of digital needs—skills for agriculture workers, use of telehealth, personal finance and entrepreneurship, online safety, education and government efficiency. Over \$14 million is available for such purposes, but we are concerned that that funding may be in jeopardy.

We understand that no program is perfect and that changes in administration lead to changes in policy. Indeed, there are many changes we would welcome. However, we believe that these programs should remain with the states and be given flexibility regarding the changes that fit for Missouri.

The federal approach to broadband programs in the past—most recently exemplified by the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund—has created obstacles that Missouri is still having to overcome. By contrast, Missouri’s BEAD and DO programs have been designed by and for state stakeholders, and we ask that any programmatic changes be left to states’ discretion.

Missouri is almost at the end and the future for broadband in Missouri looks good. At this stage, federally mandated changes would disrupt this progress and delay deployment by years. Changes can also impact the quality of broadband services and leave holes for the future—“providing something is not good enough”.

Roughly one in four rural Missourians do not have access to broadband. But they soon will if our BEAD program is allowed to proceed.

We, the undersigned group of Show Me Broadband members, State Legislators and stakeholders across the state, respectfully request that state BEAD and DO programs be allowed to proceed without delay in Missouri. We are all working together to make broadband a reality, now and for the future. Give Missouri the opportunity to succeed and let us finish with the plans that we have in place.

Thank you,

Janie Dunning

State Coordinator for Show Me Broadband
Formerly: USDA Rural Development Director,
Missouri Farm Bureau Broadband Consultant

Garrett Hawkins

President, Missouri Farm Bureau

Rep John Simmons (R, MO-109)

Utilities, Vice Chairman

Alan Lutes

ED Ozark Foothills Regional Planning
Commission

Rep. Louis Riggs (R, MO-05)

Vice Chair of Budget Subcommittee
on General Administration/Member of
Economic Development

Justin Krohn

Stakeholder

Ryan Johnson

President and CEO Chariton Valley

Rep Kemp Strickler (D, MO-34)

Ways and Means

Rep Nick Kimble (D, MO-82)
Commerce

DJ Good
Allero Telecom

Dr. Jan VanGilder
Barton Co Extension Council

Abner Womack
Professor Emeritus, University of Missouri

Rep Bruce Sassmann (R, MO-61)
Joint Committee on Rural Economic Dev.

Alfred Winder
Al Winder & Associates, Kansas City

SEMO Electric Cooperative
Sr. Leadership Team Signatures:

Sean VanSlyke
CEO, SEMO

Loyd Rice
Senior Manager, SEMO

Becky Ivester
Senior Manager Member/Subscriber
Services & Marketing, SEMO

Amanda Burnett
CFO, SEMO

Brad Milam
Senior Manager of Engineering, SEMO

Angie Buford
Senior Manager Administration and
Human Resources, SEMO

Jared Kelley
Manager Environmental, Safety, Training
And Fleet, SEMO

SEMO Electric Cooperative
Board of Directors Signatures:

Rick Faulkner
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Tim Coppage
Secretary/Treasurer of SEMO Board

James Deneke
Secretary of SEMO Board

Von Priggel
SEMO Board Member

Carl Eftink
SEMO Board Member

Dennis Fowler
SEMO Board Member

Myron Hawes
SEMO Board Member

Chris Freed
SEMO Board Member

Field LaPlant
SEMO Board Member

Dicky Hanor
SEMO Board Member

Keith Haynes
SEMO Board Member

Carla Moore
SEMO Board Member

Rep David Dolan (R, MO-148)

Health and Mental Health

Sheila Rabbitt

St. Louis Development Corporation

Rep Kathy Steinhoff (D, MO-45)

Elementary and Secondary Education

Terri English Yancy

Essential Families

Michele Gillespie

CEO, NEMR

Derek S. Leffert

Head of Government Affairs

Gateway Fiber

Rep Sherri Gallick (R, MO-62)

Economic Development

Rep Matthew Overcast (R, MO-155)

Elementary and Secondary Education

Simon Huang

Office of the Mayor, City of St Louis

Rep Connie Steinmetz (D, MO-87)

Conservation and Natural Resources

Rep George Hruza

Dermatology, St. Loui University

Copy of letter provided to

Arielle Roth, Department of Commerce

Adam Cassady, NTIA

Full Missouri Congressional Delegation (2 US Senators and 8 US Representatives)

George Pfenenger

CEO, Socket Telecom, LLC

Hannah S. Szlyk, PhD LCSW

Washington University School of Medicine

J. David Lomax

Marion County Presiding Commissioner

Kenneth Yancy

Essential Families

Rep Lisa Durnell (R, MO-154)

Agriculture

Rep Kent Haden (R, MO-43)

Chair, Healthcare Reform

Mike Hughes

Winder and Associates

Tanjii Cole

St Louis Development Corporation

Rep Tiffany Price (D, MO-26)

Crime and Public Safety

Rep Willard Haley (R, MO-58)

Vice Chair, Agriculture