2019 Annual Minnesota Broadband Profiles | Beltrami County

Rank: 6 (out of 87) for access to 100/20 megabits per second (Mbps)

Background

Every year since 2017 Blandin Foundation has contracted with Ann Treacy of Treacy Information Services to synthesize data from the Minnesota Office of Broadband Development and broadband news from communities across the state to gauge progress toward the state broadband goals (2022: 25 Mbps down and 3 Mbps up and 2026: 100 Mbps down and 20 Mbps up).

Leaders can use this information to plan and act to improve broadband access and use in their communities.

Beltrami County: data and community action

Beltrami County is poised to meet the Minnesota speed goals for both 2022 and 2026. In fact, they have been celebrating their first-place ranking (for access to Gig speeds)[1] since the latest maps came out[2] in summer of 2019.

Percentage of Served Population by Speed and Date			
Beltrami	**2019**	**2018**	**2017**
100/20 (2026 goal)	98.79	96.30	96.35
25/3 (2022 goal)	99.41	99.40	99.36

Beltrami County is home to Paul Bunyan Communications, a local cooperative that has chosen to upgrade their area to Gigabit speeds. Paul Bunyan also is active in the community, including by sponsoring tech-intensive events such as an annual Gigazone Gaming competition[3], which bring cash prizes and lots of gamers to the area each year.

Last year, Beltrami was included in a Blandin Foundation research report on the community return on public investment[4] in broadband, noting the following investments have been made in the community:
  ▪ $1.4 million to buy and renovate the Historic Mayflower Building into the LaunchPad supported in part by Greater Bemidji, Northwest Minnesota Foundation, USDA Rural Business Enterprise Grant and Paul Bunyan Communications
  ▪ $32,000 in Broadband Innovation Grants from Blandin Foundation
  ▪ Total: $1,432,000

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[1] https://blandinonbroadband.org/2019/07/31/beltrami-county-1-in-minnesota-for-access-to-gigabit-internet-speeds/
[2] https://blandinonbroadband.org/2019/08/12/beltrami-county-getting-more-attention-for-awesome-broadband/
[3] https://blandinonbroadband.org/2017/09/27/paul-bunyan-communications-2nd-annual-gigazone-gaming-championship-this-weekend/
[4] https://blandinfoundation.org/learn/research-rural/broadband-resources/broadband-initiative/measuring-impact-broadband-5-rural-mn-communities/community-profiles/beltrami-county-bemidji/

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- Using formulas[5] devised to measure impact of broadband access, from these investments Beltrami County has the potential to realize:
- A combined household economic benefit of broadband of $38,631,700 annually
- A combined increase in residential real estate value of $102,593,266

Beltrami has not benefited from Minnesota state grants; they have not received grants from the Blandin Foundation. They are an example of a community that benefits from a fully-invested provider. There are many ingredients that can help a community get better broadband – an invested provider trumps them all – but it takes intentional community effort – like we've seen in Beltrami - to maximize those benefits. In September 2019, Senator Klobuchar's staff held a listening[6] session in Beltrami County. In general, people were happy with their broadband, but one of the local providers complained about faulty mapping. Showing some communities as served, as is the case in parts of Baxter, when in fact they are not, is a barrier to seeking public investment to address those needs.

Checklist:

- 100/20 ranking: 6 (up 2)
- 25/3 ranking: 7 (down 1)
- Has worked with Blandin: no
- Has received a MN Broadband grant: no
- Household density: 5.5
- Number of providers: 7

Details:

- Find more articles on broadband in Beltrami County. (http://tinyurl.com/z5yvec6)
- Districts: CD 7 & 8
  Senate: 2, 5
  House: 02A, 05A
- Find your reps[7]

Analysis: Code Green

- Red (action needed)
- Yellow (warning – ramp up efforts)
- Green (good shape)

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[5] https://blandinfoundation.org/learn/research-rural/broadband-resources/broadband-initiative/measuring-impact-broadband-5-rural-mn-communities/return-on-investment/#formulating-broadband-value
[6] https://blandinonbroadband.org/2019/09/17/sen-klobuchar-staff-visits-brainerd-to-talk-about-broadband-infrastructure-and-housing/
[7] https://www.gis.leg.mn/iMaps/districts/

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