State Association Hosts First-Ever Broadband Technology Day

HARRISBURG – To educate lawmakers, state officials and the public about the complexities of connecting, building and operating broadband networks, the Broadband Communications Association of Pennsylvania (BCAP) hosted its first-ever Broadband Technology Day at the state Capitol.

The exhibit, consisting of seven BCAP members, was designed to tell the story of broadband by showcasing the complex technologies used to build and operate broadband networks. With fiber as the one of the leading technologies in the delivery of broadband, two exhibits included demonstrations of fiber splicing. Other portions of the exhibit detailed the process to connect broadband in communities across Pennsylvania, the latest equipment to operate smart home devices and wifi, and certification and education programs to train the newest generation of broadband workers.

Exhibits were set up by the following BCAP members: Service Electric Cablevision, Blue Ridge Communications, Comcast, PCN, Society for Telecommunications Engineers, USIC and Breezeline.

"Part of developing good public policy is understanding the industry, knowing why certain things are needed and seeing how things work. That's why we are here today," said BCAP Chairman Fran Bradley of Breezeline. "Our goal today is to explain what goes into a network, how fiber is spliced, how we design systems, and how we create backups for the backups in case of power failures or natural disasters. Our companies have been working continuously to build out broadband networks in communities that have not been previously served, and we remain dedicated to that goal."

BCAP President Todd Eachus explained that during the COVID pandemic, the need for reliable connectivity turned a bright light upon the fact that a quarter million Pennsylvania homes and businesses lack access to broadband connectivity.

Congress recognized the challenges of getting broadband networks to these often rural, and by definition, uneconomic areas and provided the necessary funds to help get the job done. Through the US Treasury Capital Projects Fund and the IIJA Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) program, Pennsylvania is slated to be the recipient approximately $1.3 billion. Monday marked 1,050 days since the passage by Congress of the BEAD program, and yet, not one customer has been served.

"BCAP has stated clearly that success depends upon those at both the federal and state governments to maintain a laser focus on the singular goal of ensuring broadband access to every corner of our Commonwealth and to every home and business in between," Eachus said. "The imposition of unnecessary and burdensome requirements, such as climate change mandates, price controls, and labor provisions all serve to distract from our common goal. Even in Pennsylvania, the state's refusal to even consider the creation of proper job classifications and wage rates, and pseudo rate regulation chill the incentive to invest and place the goal at risk."

BCAP leaders noted that all of its system members have invested millions of dollars of private capital to expand their networks over the past several years and are committed to future investments.

Chuck Duncan, vice president of Government and Regulatory Affairs for Comcast, noted that during the last three years, Comcast has invested $2.7 billion in technology and infrastructure in Pennsylvania. As part of that, Comcast's Xfinity network has expanded across the Commonwealth through its own private capital investment and through partnerships with local governments to connect unserved communities.

"We believe in the power of connection and our goal at Comcast is simple: keep our customers connected - always - and deliver reliable, gig-speed Internet to as many Americans as possible," said Duncan. "We have all witnessed the transformative power partnerships can have on our community - and today we're here to demonstrate how those partnerships have impacted broadband accessibility in communities across Pennsylvania."

A key part of the exhibit involved training the next generation of workers.

"As we continue to innovate and expand our broadband and telecommunications networks, it is essential to have a highly educated and skilled workforce," said Steve Harris, Global Commercial Relationships, SCTE. "At SCTE, we are committed to working closely with Pennsylvania's network operators to ensure that their teams are not only properly certified but also equipped with the critical hands-on skills needed to support the industry's growth and meet the evolving demands of modern connectivity.

"In spite of the hurdles before us, BCAP members continue to seek opportunity in the communities they have served for generations. Our members know better than any government official, better than any regulator and bureaucrat, what is takes to build, operate and maintain networks that are safe, resilient and sustainable," Eachus concluded. "They know better than anyone what it takes to get to the most rural and sparse corners of our commonwealth. BCAP members are ready to be part of the solution. There is no time like today to dispense with the sound bites and get on with the business of delivering the gigabytes."

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The Broadband Communications Association of Pennsylvania hosted its first-ever Broadband Technology Day at the Capitol to showcase the various technologies to building and sustain

networks. Pictured are (at podium) BCAP President Todd Eachus and BCAP Chairman Fran Bradley of Breezeline; (standing from left) BCAP Board Members Sam Haulman, Service Electric Cablevision; Mike Starner, Service Electric Cable TV and Communications; Associate Member Steve Harris, SCTE; and Board Members Chuck Duncan, Comcast; and Joe Lorah, Blue Ridge Communications.

The Broadband Communications Association of Pennsylvania, a member-driven organization based in Harrisburg, actively promotes broadband cable and telecommunications industry issues in Pennsylvania. BCAP – the nation's first state cable association – represents cable operators, programmers and equipment suppliers that collectively provide service to nearly 3 million Pennsylvania households and businesses.

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