



# **A Stronger, More Resilient Economy:** *An Update to the FNSB Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy*

FEDCo Communications Roundtable

January 6, 2022



# Introduction & Purpose

# Invited Participants

Name	Affiliation	Notes
Dean Kruckenberg	Ace Tekk Wireless Internet	Invited
<b>Kevin Hamer</b>	<b>Akiak Technology</b>	<b>Attended</b>
<b>Justin Burgess</b>	<b>Alasconnect</b>	<b>Attended</b>
<b>Heather Cavanaugh, Ryan Ponder</b>	<b>Alaska Communications</b>	<b>Attended</b>
Senators Lesil McGuire and David Guttenberg	Alaska State Legislature	Invited
<b>Christine O'Connor</b>	<b>Alaska Telecom Association</b>	<b>Attended</b>
Harold Johnson	Alaska Tribal Broadband	Invited
Will Johnson	Alaska Satellite Internet	Invited
Erik O'Brien	Denali Commission	Invited
<b>Jenifer Nelson</b>	<b>General Communication INC (GCI)</b>	<b>Attended</b>
<b>Allen Todd</b>	<b>Governors Task Force on Broadband</b>	<b>Attended</b>
<b>Wanda Tankersley</b>	<b>Matanuska Telephone Association</b>	<b>Attended</b>
Chuck Schumann, Sandra Blinstrubas, Sierra Parker	Microcom	Invited
<b>Shawn Williams</b>	<b>Pacific Dataport</b>	<b>Attended</b>
<b>Ariel Burr</b>	<b>Quintillion</b>	<b>Attended</b>
Kathleen McArdle	Verizon	Invited
<b>Eric</b>	<b>(affiliation not captured)</b>	<b>Attended</b>

# The Project Team



**FNSB Project Manager:**  
Brittany Smart



**Contracting Team:**  
Shelly Wade, AICP  
Molly Mylius

*Project Steering Committee: the FNSB Economic Development Commission*

Supporting team  
members:

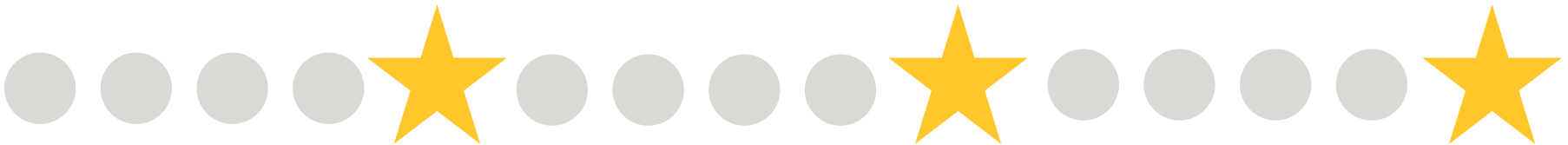


# Project Purpose

**To develop an updated Five-Year FNSB Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).**

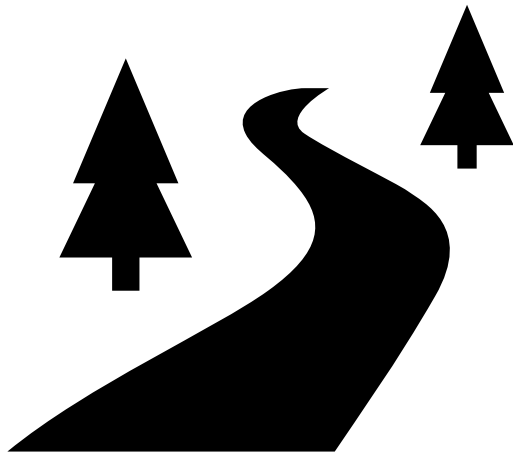


CEDS must go through a robust update every five years, with shorter, less intensive updates annually.



# CEDS Purpose

A CEDS is a locally-based, regionally-driven economic development planning document that guides local government and community action.



It serves as a road map to economy resilience and prosperity.

# What does a CEDS do?

- Brings the private and public sector together to develop a regional strategy and action plan.
- Identifies projects and makes recommendations to:

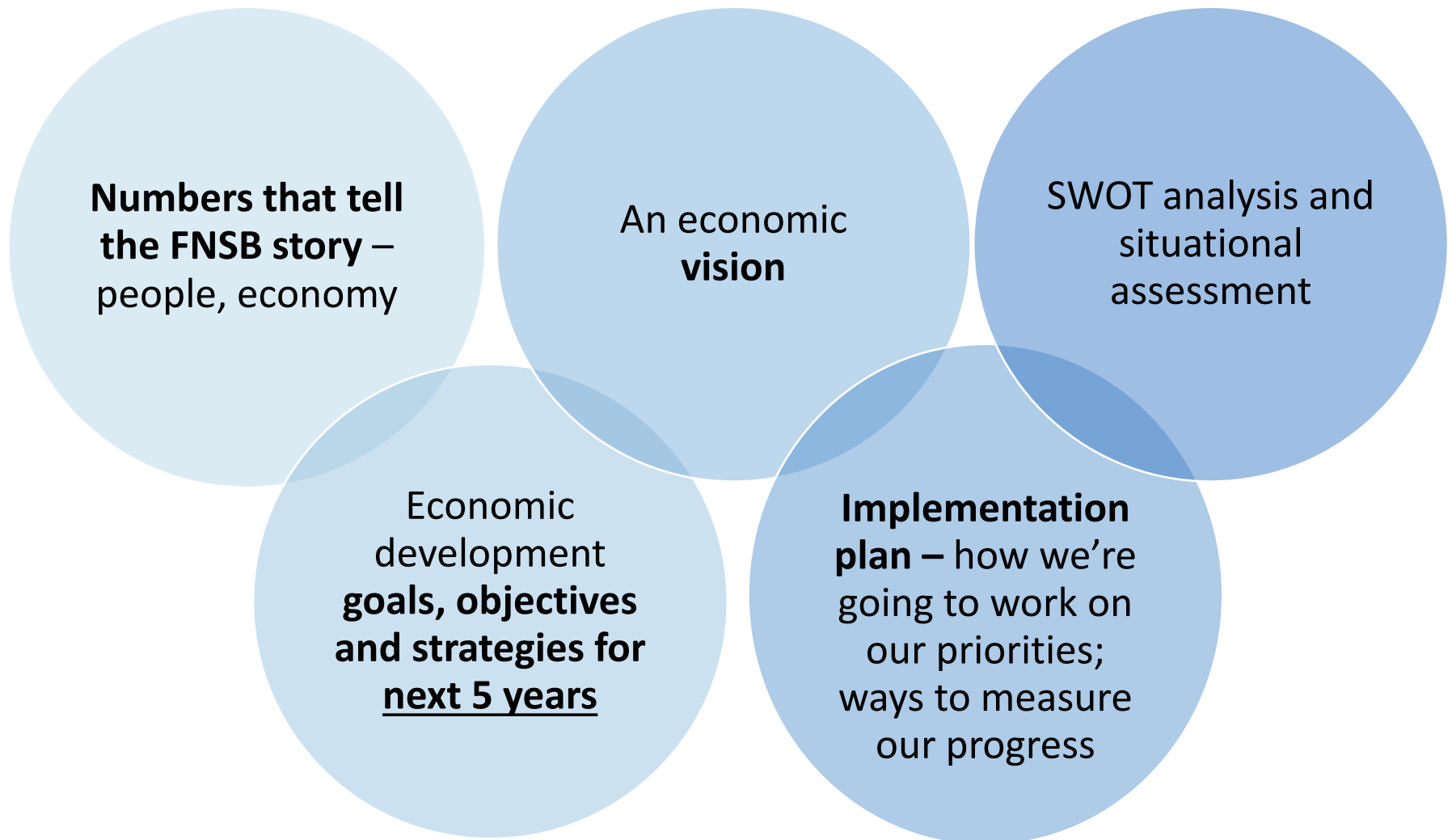
Secure and  
support  
businesses

Create  
more and  
better  
paying jobs

Improve  
quality of  
life

Increase  
resilience  
to changes,  
threats

# What does a CEDS include?



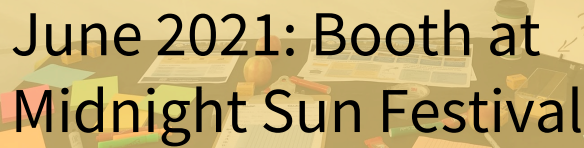


# CEDS Update Timeline

	2021									2022						
	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	→
<b>Project Website</b>	•	← ongoing website updates →														Adoption
<b>Stakeholder Interviews</b>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•						
<b>Interactive Discussions</b>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•						
<b>Community Events</b>			Midnight Sun, Golden Days, Fair													
<b>Economic Summit</b>											•					
<b>E-Newsletters, <u>Social Media</u>, Public Notices, News, Radio</b>										•	•		•		•	
<b>Key Phases</b>	<i>Project Kickoff</i>		<i>Research &amp; Events, Interviews</i>				<i>Draft Vision &amp; Goals</i>			<i>Economic Summit</i>		<i>Public Review Draft</i>			<i>Final CEDS</i>	→

We are here

# Community Events



# Proposed FNSB CEDS Topics/Sectors

## Industry Clusters

*key sectors that drive the FNSB economy*

Energy

Healthcare

Military

Natural Resources  
(Agriculture, Forestry, Mining)

Research & Innovation

Visitation

## Community Influencers

*supportive foundations that clusters rely on to grow and flourish*

Communications

Government

Housing and Land Use

Quality of Life

Transportation

Utilities

Education & Workforce Development

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The CEDS will:

- Include a **dedicated “1-Pager” for each industry cluster** – tailored snapshot, SWOT, goals, strategies and implementation actions.

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- Position the community/industry for **funding and investment opportunities**.

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- Articulate a **shared economic development vision and goals** for industry, consumers, government.
- Position the community/industry for **funding and investment opportunities**.
- Hold everyone accountable with **measurable short and longer-term targets** and **ways to track and communicate progress**.



# Communications Context



# Communications:

## Highlights from 2016 CEDS

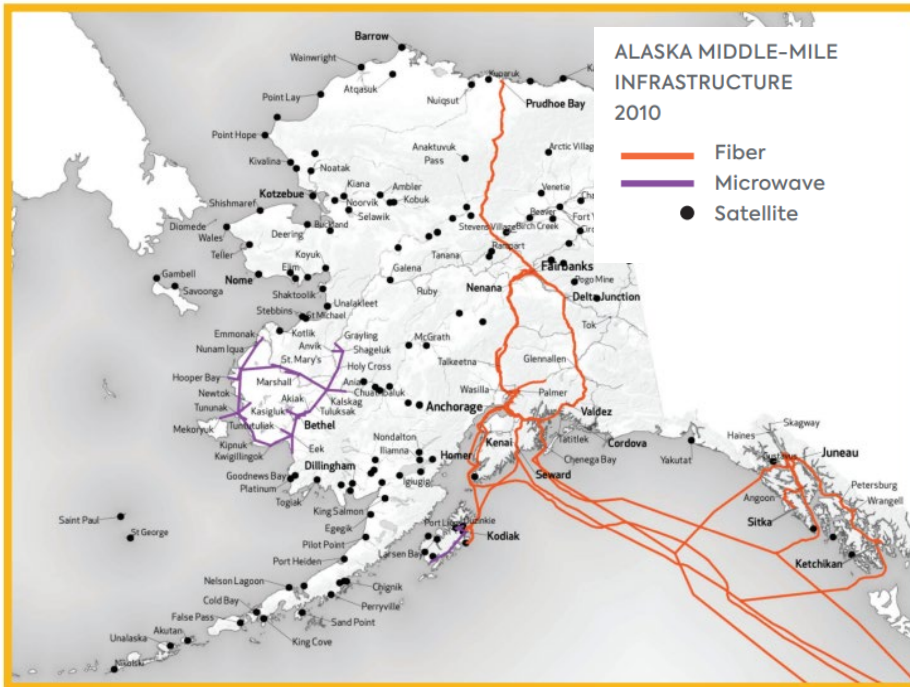
- Fairbanks is connected to Alaska's fiber optic cable system that runs from Prudhoe Bay to Anchorage.
- Alaska is connected to the contiguous U.S. by four fiber optic cables.
- The number of residential land line phone customers increased by 1.5 percent a year between 2000 and 2008. Since 2008, the number of residential customers dropped by 6.4 percent a year (2015 data).
- There are 134 FCC-approved cell phone towers in FNSB.
  - 107 have been constructed, with 27 receiving approvals but not yet constructed (2015 data).

# Communications: Highlights from the Eielson Regional Growth Plan (2018)

- While cellular service providers indicate there is adequate coverage in the Eielson/Salcha area, civilian and military personnel have indicated the cellular service is not consistent.
- There are no specific current plans for additional cellular transmission towers in this area, however, new cellular service tower(s) could be in place under the AT&T FirstNet program.
  - *The FirstNet network helps ensure first responders and the public safety community have access to the interoperable communications and technologies to more efficiently and quickly coordinate responses to emergencies.*

# Middle-Mile Infrastructure, 2010 vs. 2019

*“Middle-Mile” is the fiber and/or microwave wireless infrastructure that connects the ultra-capacity long-haul networks coming into Alaska from Seattle and Portland with “last-mile” networks in communities*



Map credit: Alaska Telecom Association

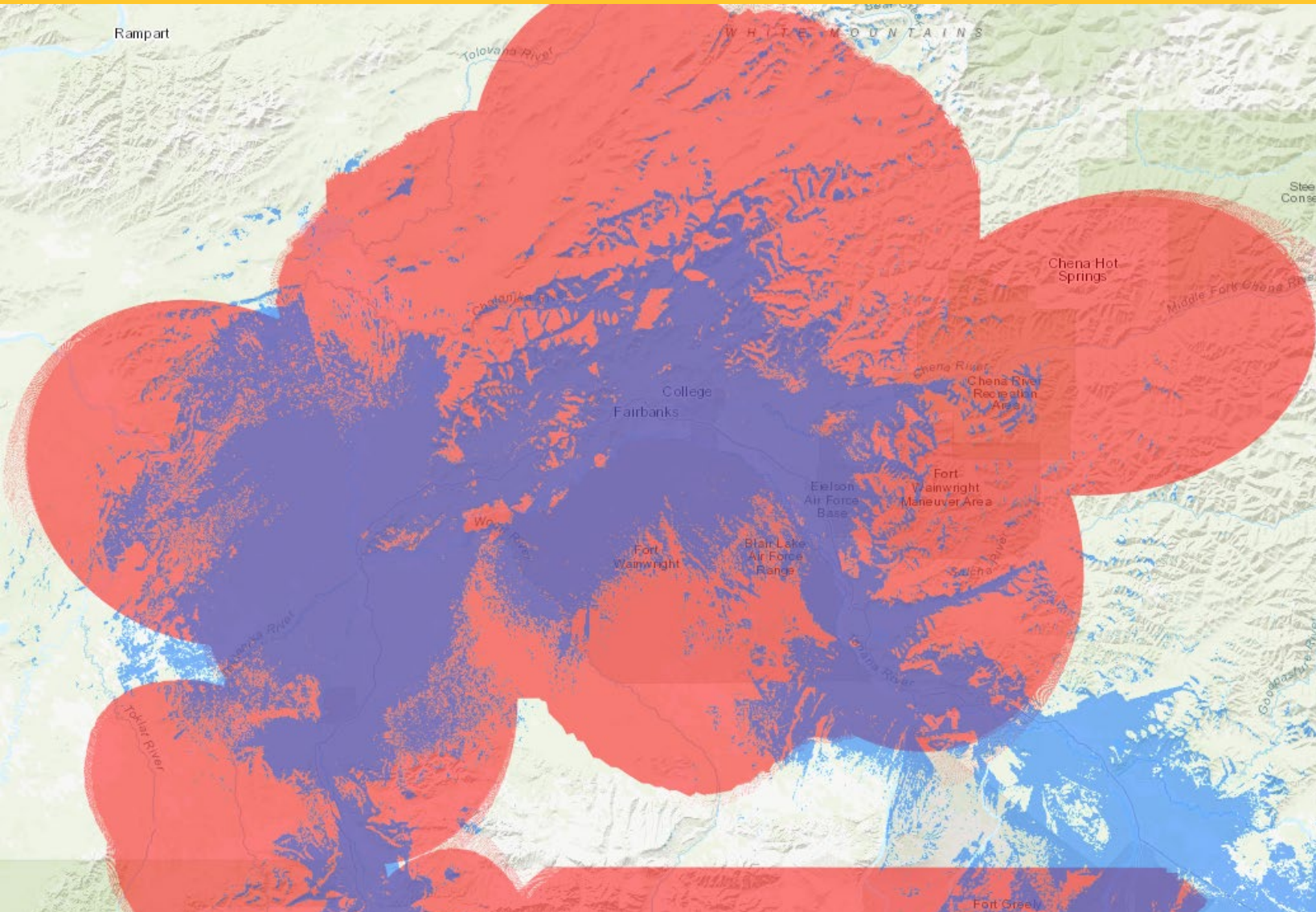


Map credit: Alaska Telecom Association

Source: *A Blueprint for Alaska's Broadband Future, 2019*



# 4G LTE Coverage Map



**AT&T Mobility LTE Data**

AT&T Mobility LTE Data

**T-Mobile LTE Data**

T-Mobile LTE Data

**UScellular LTE Data**

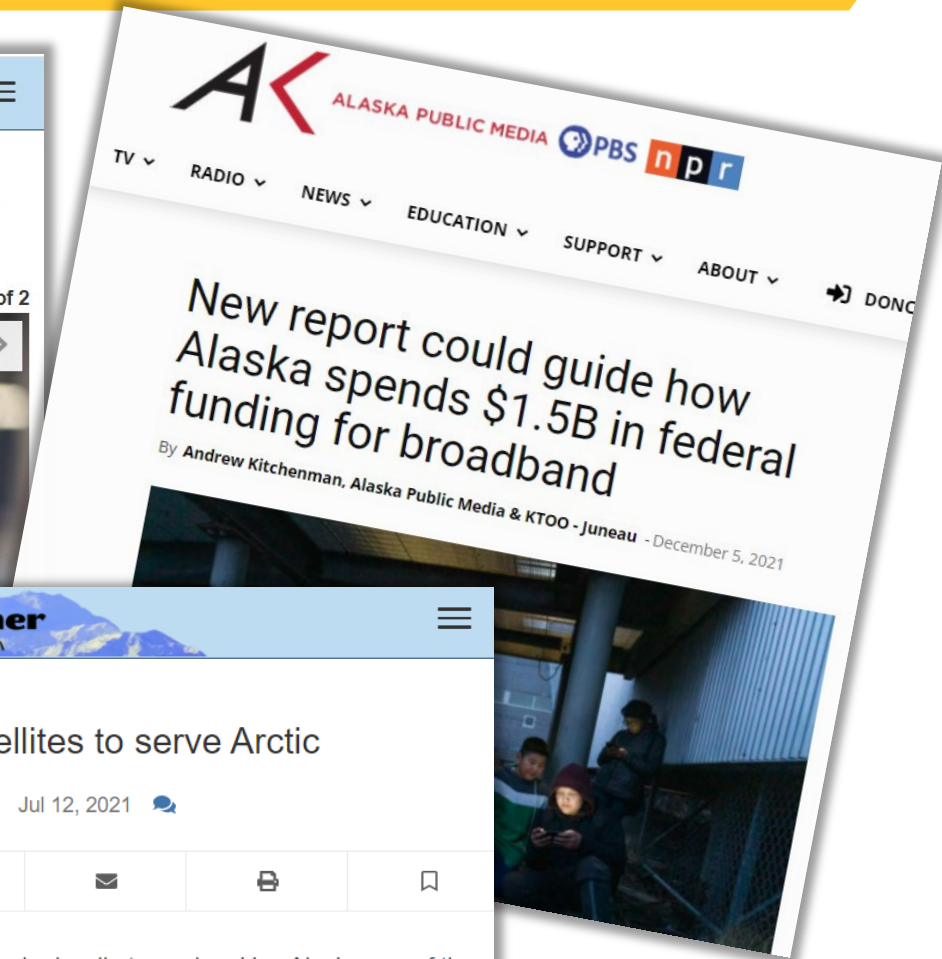
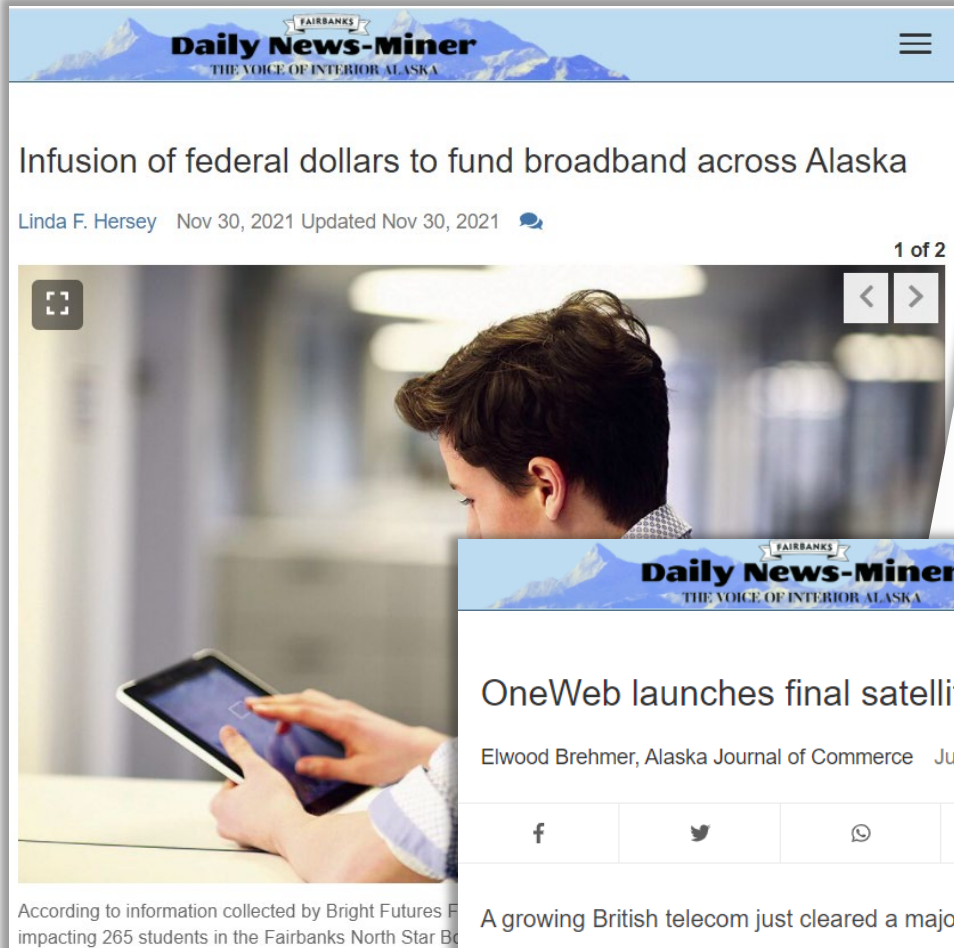
UScellular LTE Data

**Verizon LTE Data**

Verizon LTE Data

*Only  
includes  
the four  
providers  
above*

# Recent Telecommunications Progress



# Communications: Strengths and Weaknesses of the Region

1. What **factors contribute** to a successful communication sector in the FNSB/Interior AK?
2. What **factors are a barrier** to a successful communications sector in the FNSB/Interior AK?

# Discussion: Strengths

- Providers want to help connect Alaskans. There is a lot of shared interest in achieving better connectivity.
- Current infrastructure has continued to expand throughout the state, such as a 5<sup>th</sup> cable installed along the Dalton Highway.
- The [final report](#) for the Governor's Task Force on Broadband was recently released (November 2021) and offers helpful strategies for meeting priority needs.



# Discussion: Weaknesses

- Current FCC Broadband maps use a process developed 20 years ago that is not helpful, relevant, or accurate to capture needs today.
- There are some land use policies and ordinances that create challenges for affordably installing telecommunications infrastructure. For example: deploying mesh technology is more efficient and affordable when it can be done on top of existing community facilities, but companies have experienced challenges getting approved access. This slows the delivery of new technology.
- The past CEDS did not include any data on broadband connectivity.



# Discussion: Weaknesses

- There are still many middle mile gaps in Alaska's infrastructure, and less funding is going toward the middle mile.
- The infusion of funds for Tribes to expand broadband infrastructure has also attracted potentially unfavorable or disingenuous partners that are not interested in the short and long-term goals of Tribes but are potentially most interested in their own financial gain. They take advantage of communities and do not provide a long-lasting service and quality product.

# Recommendations from Past FNSB Plans

The 2016 CEDS does not include communications recommendations. However, the 2018 Eielson Regional Growth Plan included the following:

- **UI3: Work with private cell providers to improve cell phone reception in underserved areas.**

*The Borough should conduct initial research to identify areas where service is poor, then work with private sector providers on a plan for incrementally improving service. This may require actions like streamlined permitting, below market rate leases on land for towers, some form of financial assistance, etc.*

- **UI4: Build from the work of the Alaska Broadband Task Force, Arctic Council and best practices to develop reliable broadband connectivity in the Salcha-Badger Road area.**

*Potentially create rural broadband coops or make strategic use of public infrastructure to create connections where there are none, and improve consistency where connectivity is unpredictable and a barrier to quality of life.*

*For more details see the Eielson Regional Growth Plan Utilities and Infrastructure chapter, starting on page 99 of the full plan: <http://www.eafbregionalgrowth.com/>*

# Discussion

- What can we do over the next five years to grow and strengthen the communications sector?

For example, what projects/strategies will:

- ✓ Expand access to affordable and reliable service?
- ✓ Expand communications-related businesses?
- ✓ Increase local employment in the industry?
- ✓ Increase industry resilience and mitigate vulnerabilities?

- What is most important for us to focus on over the next five years?

# Discussion: Recommendations

- The public and private sector need to be working together to meet needs and avoid duplication. For example, ideally the public sector is not establishing new cooperatives in underserved areas that could be better served by existing industry. The limitation to expanding service is not disinterest, it is a lack of funding.
- There needs to be more trust and relationship building between Tribal communities, the state, federal agencies, and private sector partners. The most underserved areas are often Tribal communities. Funds are becoming available for Tribal and in many areas, partnerships will be required for projects to be successful, and to ensure Tribes are receiving a quality product.

# Discussion: Recommendations

- There should be a review of existing land use policies to ensure they are supporting current telecommunication needs. The industry is changing rapidly and it's important to ensure land use and other policies are evolving to match.
- Improving telecommunication also will require other infrastructure improvements to increase the resilience of systems, such as affordable and stable power. When the power goes out in some rural communities, the telecommunications go down, too.

# What are the communication trends in FNSB/ Interior and how can we measure success?

What/Data	Source
Percent of FNSB households served by one or more broadband providers	<i>Federal Communications Commission</i>
Download and upload speeds available	<i>Federal Communications Commission</i>
4G LTE coverage maps	<i>Federal Communications Commission</i>

- **What other data, sources should we consider?**
- **What measurable progress do we want to make over the next five years?**

# Discussion: Other Data to Consider

- The FCC is updating its coverage maps using methodology that is much more granular. It will inform how federal infrastructure funds get distributed and they will be much better and more accurate for Alaska; estimated release is early 2023.
- Wireless coverage maps from providers
- Number of students who qualify for the school reduced lunch program, which determines eligibility for the [E-Rate program](#)
- Eligibility and participation in [FCC's Affordable Connectivity Program](#)

# Next Steps & Wrap-Up



# Next Steps

- January 2022 – Conclude sector outreach
- **February 22-23, 2022 – Economic Summit**
  - Who else should we invite to participate in this conversation? (especially private sector representatives)
- April 2022 – Release public review draft
- June 2022 – Release final draft

# Learn More on Our Website



## 2021 Fairbanks North Star Borough Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Update

PURPOSE

WHAT IS INCLUDED?

TOPICS

PROJECT TEAM

GET INVOLVED

SCHEDULE

RESOURCES

CONTACT US

*A Stronger, More Resilient Economy.*

[www.FNSBCEDS.com](http://www.FNSBCEDS.com)

# Other Relevant Planning Efforts

<b>Tanana Chiefs Conference Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy</b>	<a href="http://www.tananachiefs.org/ceds/">www.tananachiefs.org/ceds/</a>
<b>Comprehensive Roads Plan</b>	<a href="http://fnsbroadspan.com/">fnsbroadspan.com/</a>
<b>Fairbanks Downtown Plan</b>	<i>Updated website coming soon</i>
<b>Comprehensive Recreational Trails Plan</b>	<a href="http://fnsbtrailsplan.com/">fnsbtrailsplan.com/</a>
<b>Pioneer Park Master Plan</b>	<a href="http://fairbankspioneerparkplan.com/">fairbankspioneerparkplan.com/</a>

# Thank you!

## **Brittany Smart**

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**Want to learn more? Visit our website: [FNSBCEDS.com](http://FNSBCEDS.com)**