

# **RVBAT Meeting – October 1, 2025**

## **Meeting Purpose**

To discuss recent developments in broadband connectivity, including BEAD awards, T-Mobile/Starlink updates, and the upcoming Oregon Connections Telecommunications Conference.

## **Key Takeaways**

- Concerns raised over Starlink's dominance in BEAD awards, particularly regarding affordability and access in rural areas
- T-Mobile's satellite service expanding capabilities, now including light data for some apps and video calling
- T-Mobile's acquisition of U.S. Cellular significantly improves coverage in rural areas
- Government shutdown potentially impacting federal funding and programs, creating uncertainty in long-term planning

## **Topics**

### **BEAD Awards and Starlink Concerns**

- Preliminary BEAD awards announced, with Starlink winning a significant portion
- Concerns raised about:
  - Impact on rural areas without good sight lines for satellite service
  - Affordability issues, as Starlink is expensive
  - Access limitations for renters due to installation requirements

### **T-Mobile and Starlink Partnership Updates**

- T-Mobile's satellite service progressing rapidly:
  - Full rich text messaging (SMS, MMS, voice memos) now available
  - New functionality with iOS 16 update, supporting various Apple apps
  - Light data turned on for some third-party apps (e.g., WhatsApp video calling)
- ~700 satellites now in orbit, improving service quality

### **T-Mobile and U.S. Cellular Acquisition**

- Acquisition finalized about a month ago
- Immediate implementation of roaming agreements

- Significant coverage improvement in rural areas:
  - Example: Jackson County gained ~20-25 additional towers
  - T-Mobile now has more spectrum and towers than Verizon and AT&T in Jackson and Josephine Counties

## **Government Shutdown Impact**

- Uncertainty around federal funding and programs
- Potential delays in reimbursements for ongoing work
- Concerns about Perkins funding for CTE programs
- Long-term planning challenges due to uncertain federal landscape

## **Oregon Connections Telecommunications Conference**

- Scheduled for October 29-30 in Hood River
- Registration still open, more attendees needed
- BEAD update session planned, but OBO attendance uncertain due to travel restrictions
- Robust discussions with awardees expected, providing insights

## **T-Mobile 5G Friday Night Lights Program**

- Lebanon High School in top 25 for potential \$1 million stadium remodel prize
- Currently in second place, 13,000 votes behind leader
- Request for help in promoting and voting for Lebanon High School

## **Next Steps**

- Jackie to provide a report on the Oregon Connections Telecommunications Conference at the next meeting (November 5th)
- Attendees to consider registering for the Oregon Connections Telecommunications Conference
- Explore possibilities to support Lebanon High School in the T-Mobile 5G Friday Night Lights contest
- Continue monitoring government shutdown impacts on funding and programs

## **Action Items**

- **Take notes at Oregon Connections Telecom Conf. Prep actionable report for next RVBAT mtg.**