

RVBAT Meeting – July 1, 2026

Meeting Purpose

To sync on regional broadband, AI, and digital equity initiatives.

Key Takeaways

- **AI Education:** Victor will present an "AI for dummies" overview to the Rvcog board to build a common understanding for policy discussions.
- **Starlink for Emergency Comms:** Starlink's direct-to-cell service now supports apps like WhatsApp and OnX Maps, providing a critical tertiary communication layer for first responders in disaster-prone areas.
- **Digital Skills Gap:** Josephine Community Library District is filling a critical digital skills training gap left by WorkSource, serving residents who travel long distances from rural areas like Trail, OR.
- **Budget Realities:** Jackson County's budget crunch (7%+ expense growth vs. ~4% revenue growth) forced the closure of the jail basement and may require a future voter-approved revenue measure.

Topics

AI & Digital Equity

- **Rvcog Board Presentation:** Victor will deliver an "AI for dummies" overview to the Rvcog board (mostly elected officials) to establish a baseline for policy discussions.
 - **Rationale:** The board's digital literacy varies widely, from active users to those who oppose all AI use.
- **OSU's NSF Grant Proposal:** OSU is leading a statewide proposal for a National Science Foundation grant to establish an "AI workforce readiness coordination" center.
 - **Partners:** HEC, Technology Association of Oregon, Oregon STEM, and community colleges.
 - **Deadline:** July 15.
- **"Human in the Lead" Principle:** The group adopted this term to clarify that AI is a tool, not an autonomous agent.
 - **Rationale:** This distinction is critical for responsible use, productivity, and international competitiveness.
- **AI & Robotics Use Cases:**
 - **Aging in Place:** Robots guide exercises for older adults, increasing activity by 30%. AI-powered home monitors can detect distress (e.g.,

specific coughs, lack of movement), but reliable broadband is essential for safety.

- **Wildfire Detection:** Alert West cameras use AI to detect fires, sending alerts to humans for verification.

Broadband & Emergency Communications

- **Starlink Direct-to-Cell:** Ryan confirmed Starlink's direct-to-cell service now supports:
 - WhatsApp (video/voice calls)
 - OnX Maps & CalTOPO
 - T-Mobile Direct Connect (push-to-talk)
- **Emergency Preparedness:**
 - **Lake County Case Study:** Starlink provided the only communication link after a fire cut the county's sole fiber line.
 - **Cascadia Rising Exercise:** A 3-day simulation revealed a Cascadia earthquake would likely destroy all bridges west of I-5, highlighting the need for resilient communication infrastructure.
- **Williams Area Connectivity:**
 - **Current Status:** T-Mobile is the only provider with towers in the area. The US Cellular-to-T-Mobile conversion is messy but will eventually improve coverage.
 - **Future:** A new T-Mobile tower near Jacksonville is ~1 year from completion. No other major fiber or tower builds are planned.

Regional Updates

- **Jackson County Budget:**
 - **Problem:** Expenses are growing at 7%+ annually, while the tax base grows at only ~4% (due to Measure 50 limits).
 - **Impact:** Forced the closure of the jail basement. A future voter-approved revenue measure is likely needed to maintain service levels.
- **Josephine Community Library District (JCLD):**
 - **Focus:** Shifting from LSTA grant work to distributing tech resources (hotspots, laptops).
 - **Digital Skills Training:** JCLD is filling a gap left by WorkSource, which no longer offers these classes.
- **Jackson County Library System (JCLS):**
 - **Partnership:** JCLS is partnering with Rogue Retreat to provide digital skills classes for residents experiencing homelessness.