April 27, 2026

Representative Ashley Carrick, Chair
House State Affairs Committee

Re: Request for Additional Information on Broadband and BEAD Hearing

Honorable Chair and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present to the committee on our broadband projects across Alaska. GCI is pleased to provide a response to members' questions from the March 26 House State Affairs Committee hearing. We remain available to assist with any follow-up questions.

Representative Story asked how we engage with AVTEC and what our workforce development program looks like.

Building a strong technical workforce in Alaska is a priority for GCI and we are engaged in a variety of efforts.

High School and Early Workforce Pipeline
Educating young Alaskans on career opportunities early is paramount to a thriving Alaska economy. Our primary partnership focused on high school students is with King Tech High School. During the fall term, GCI supported *Telecom 101* and *IT* classes by contributing to the development of the lesson plans as well as assisting with instruction. We are currently coordinating an additional supportive engagement with King Tech this spring.

During the current school year, GCI has also participated in career days and other student engagement events at the following locations:

- Academies of Anchorage – Freshman Career Expo
- Alaska Pacific University (APU) – Job & Information Tables
- Tuluksak School
- Charter College
- East High School – Living Library
- Sitka High School – Job Fair

Looking ahead, GCI plans to participate in:

- King Tech Spring Hiring Event
- AVTEC Job Fair

University Partnerships and Internships
GCI has established partnerships with the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) and the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) within their Engineering and Data Science departments. These partnerships have included supporting student projects and hiring several interns for both the Spring and Summer 2026 terms.

AVTEC Engagement
While GCI's Technical Development team has not had direct programmatic engagement with AVTEC to date, GCI has recently been invited to speak with AVTEC students.

- April 7: Vincent Joseph presented to AVTEC's IT class, providing students with direct, real-world insights into careers in information technology and telecommunications.

Technical Development Training and NTIA Workforce Investments
GCI's Technical Development team has advanced workforce development through federally supported training initiatives. The summary below highlights training delivered through NTIA's Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program.

Program Overview (2024–2025)
From 2024–2025, GCI delivered two workforce development programs across four sessions in partnership with Bethel Native Corporation and Yuut Elitnaurviat (The People's Learning Center) in Bethel, Alaska.
Training Programs

- **Telecommunications Technician Assistant Training:** Designed to prepare rural Alaskans for immediate employment.
- **Train-the-Trainer Telecommunications Technician Assistant Training:** Enabled current telecommunications technicians to recruit and train additional assistants while deployed to remote Alaska locations.

Training Logistics

- All sessions were held at Yuut Elitnaurviat in Bethel.
- Each session was a four-day intensive course.
- Instruction included hands-on field training at the GCI Bethel Terra shelter facility.
- Courses were taught by highly experienced GCI technicians.
- Participants stayed in Yuut dormitories, with meals provided onsite.

Participation and Outcomes

- **56** total participants trained.
- Included **34** Telecommunications Technician Assistants and **22** traveling technician trainers.

After completing the training:

- GCI hired 34 Telecommunications Technician Assistants (also known as Rural Site Agents).
- The program enables participants to remain in their home communities while supporting rural network operations.
- Graduates conduct facilities inspections and routine upkeep for satellite and wireless infrastructure, and they support installers, technicians, and engineers in remote locations.
- These roles have improved service reliability and response times across rural Alaska.

Core Skills and Capabilities Covered
Training topics included:

- Telecommunications site and facilities inspections
- Generator fueling and power-outage response
- Remote technical assistance and basic equipment troubleshooting
- Installation support at customer locations
- Safety training (electrical safety, RF awareness, power tools, CPR/first aid)
- Tower lighting checks, ladder handling, and equipment cleaning

- General site upkeep (snow removal, brush clearing, housekeeping)
- E911 service reliability and outage-notification requirements

---

Rep. Story asked about data centers, their energy utilization and the necessary capacity.

Hyperscaler based datacenters require significant power loads, range of hundreds of Mega Watts of continuous power; Alaska deployments would require net-new power generation.

Rep. Himschoot asked about what outages and maintenance will look like after BEAD funding is used.

The BEAD deployments we anticipate across the state, including our own, will greatly improve diversification and redundancy of Alaska's telecommunications infrastructure, resulting in fewer outages and faster recoveries when disruptions do occur. In the meantime, we will continue to implement best practices for network operations and maintenance, always looking for optimization opportunities. Currently, that involves the establishment of a Disaster Recovery Plan (DRP) across critical network areas, ensuring we have key areas identified and proactive measures in place to engage if an outage/impairment occurs. We consistently evaluate opportunities for diversity or alternate transport across the network. In addition, we have regular Preventative Maintenance (PMs) routines built for on-site assessment and action required to ensure both the physical plant and electronics has long term visibility and viability. An example of this could be the replacement of the filters on a switch and/or documenting that a fiber span crossing entering a body of water has eyes on it periodically and fiber Key Performance Indicators (KPI) regularly reviewed for potential problems such as latency, jitter, or packet loss.

Rep. Himschoot asked about possible network expansion to Sitka.

Sitka is a top priority community for network upgrades that will result in improved reliability and network resilience. We are currently evaluating and planning improvements to this end and will share further details with you in the very near future.

Rep. McCabe asked about permitting and if we have what we need for timely permits.

GCI experiences a variety of challenges causing deployment delays when obtaining permits. Our decades of observations inform the following recommendations:

ADOT&PF Aviation Leasing: Public Notice for Minor Lease Modifications
Issue: Minor aviation lease modifications can trigger a full public notice period, even when the scope of work is limited.

Impact: The additional 30-day notice can effectively double approval timelines for time-sensitive projects.
Potential Improvement: Exempt clearly defined minor lease amendments from additional public notice requirements.

ADF&G Fish Habitat: Permits for Directional Boring Under Water Bodies
Issue: Directional bores beneath water bodies may require fish habitat permits based on hypothetical sediment release in failure scenarios.
Impact: For deep, engineered bores with low risk under normal operations, permitting can add time to otherwise low-impact work.
Potential Improvement: Establish streamlined or categorical review criteria for deep directional bores with demonstrated low risk.

State Fire Marshal: Plan Review for Low-Occupancy Utility Facilities
Issue: Plan review may be required for unoccupied or low-occupancy facilities such as telecom shelters, generators, and certain towers.
Impact: Assignment delays and multiple review cycles add cost and schedule risk to routine infrastructure projects.
Potential Improvement: Create exemptions or expedited review pathways for clearly low-risk, low-occupancy utility facilities.

DNR Lands: Utility Easement Processing Time
Issue: Utility easement approvals often take 9–12 months or longer.
Impact: Delays can result in missed construction seasons, increased mobilization costs, and deferred service delivery.
Potential Improvement: Develop predictable processing timelines and prioritization mechanisms for time-sensitive utility projects.

DOT&PF Right-of-Way: Utility Survey and As-Built Requirements
Issue: ROW permitting requires detailed early-stage utility surveys and as-built documentation that may include third-party utilities.
Impact: Requirements can force rework when alignments change, delay permit submittals, and be difficult to meet in rural areas with limited records.
Potential Improvement: Allow phased or risk-based survey requirements and flexibility where third-party data are unavailable.

SHPO / OHA: Cultural Resource Screening Access and Consultation Timeliness
Issue: AHRS database access and consultation often require credentialed specialists and can be difficult to complete quickly for routine screening.
Impact: Limited access and slow response times can delay early project decisions and increase costs due to outsourcing.
Potential Improvement: Expand access for routine screening and establish response-time targets for low-impact consultations.

ADOT&PF Utility Permits: Duplicative Application Submittal for ROW
Issue: Applicants are currently required to submit both an online application through the new ADOT permitting portal and a separate hard-copy application by email.
Impact: Duplicate submittals create unnecessary administrative burden and inefficiency for applicants.

Potential Improvement: Eliminate redundant submission requirements and rely solely on the online permitting system once applications are accepted.

Uncertain Timelines for ADOT Utility Permit Approvals
Issue: Utility permit approval timelines vary widely by region and reviewer, ranging from approximately three weeks to five months.
Impact: Unpredictable timelines make project scheduling difficult, particularly given Alaska's short construction season.
Potential Improvement: Establish standard processing timeframes (e.g., 4–6 weeks) to allow applicants to reliably plan construction activities.

Lack of Clarity in Regional Utility Permit Requirements
Issue: Utility permit application requirements can vary by DOT&PF region and are not consistently documented.
Impact: Inconsistent guidance can lead to re-submittals, restarted review clocks, and delays to pre-construction activities.
Potential Improvement: Develop and publish clear, region-specific permit application guidance, including portal navigation and submittal requirements, for all three ADOT&PF regions.
Again, thank you for your attention and commitment to broadband projects in Alaska. These are critical services and we are proud to continue our work closing the digital divide across our most beautiful, unique state. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any additional telecommunications questions.

Respectfully submitted,

Lindsay Solie Jensen
Lindsay Solie Jensen
VP, Government Affairs
GCI