FCC Commissioner and Minot Leaders Join SRT for Informational Day on Critical Communications Infrastructure

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Minot, N.D. – Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Commissioner Olivia Trusty and Senior Legal Advisor Marcus Maher visited Minot on August 13 to tour critical communications systems and engage in roundtable discussion with Minot area leaders.

SRT CEO/General Manager Cassidy Hjelmstad, FCC Commissioner Trusty, and FCC Senior Legal Advisor Maher began the day with a tour from officials of the Minot Air Force Base. They followed the MAFB tour with an afternoon at SRT's facilities, getting a full picture of the broadband provider and the communities it serves.

OSP Engineering Manager Scott Senger kicked off the afternoon program by presenting an introductory overview of SRT, from its establishment 75 years ago to its current impact as North Dakota's largest telecommunications cooperative. Highlighting the vast rural nature of its service area and advanced technology behind its services, the SRT team illustrated the importance of high-speed internet with real case studies. These stories ranged from remote rural communities using broadband for telehealth and agriculture, to projects based in Minot that advance regional sports, to the intermodal Logistics Park hub driving international commerce.

The presentation underscored SRT's commitment to deliver high-speed internet to everyone in its service area, regardless of distance, land area, or population. Senger noted

that SRT provides the same service to Antler, with a population of 19, that it offers in the city of Minot.

Hjelmstad and Carissa Swenson, Executive Director of the Broadband Association of North America (BAND), described North Dakota's fiber optic network – a collaboration of DCN owners and BAND members that provides seamless broadband connection across the state and out to the global internet.

When discussion turned to SRT's designation as a Smart Rural Community℠ (SRC) provider by NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association, Commissioner Trusty noted SRC as a positive initiative that recognizes the work local broadband providers are doing for their communities.

To see the technology behind SRT's broadband network first-hand, the FCC visitors then explored SRT's host facility. Jordan Kelly, SRT Network Operations Manager, led an informational tour of the systems that support and deliver broadband throughout SRT's service area. Commissioner Trusty met employees from operations, engineering, and IT disciplines and had the opportunity to ask questions about SRT's fiber network.



The day concluded with a roundtable discussion involving area leaders of major service sectors, such as Michael Frye, Chief of Police for the City of Minot; Kevin Harmon, Vice President for Student Affairs and Intercollegiate Athletics at Minot State University; Brekka

Kramer, President/CEO of the Minot Area Chamber EDC; and Christopher Van Gels, Vice President, Facilities Management of Trinity Health.

The informational day in Minot demonstrated how telecommunications function across an integrated system that keeps North Dakota moving, productive, and safe. During discussions, Commissioner Trusty indicated a greater appreciation of what SRT is doing and its impact on the state and beyond. She also noted how broadband supports essential, mission-critical services integral to life safety and economic prosperity. For example, North Dakota's energy and agriculture sectors produce food and fuel that benefit Americans across the country, while the Minot Air Force Base is a key military installation critical to the nation's deterrence strategy.

"SRT appreciates Commissioner Trusty and Senior Advisor Maher visiting Minot to learn about our telecommunications services and engage in meaningful dialogue with our leadership partners about the vital implications of broadband," said Hjelmstad. "We were honored to demonstrate how SRT and other telecommunications cooperatives work to bridge the digital divide across North Dakota and advance economic vitality and quality of life indicators, both statewide and nationally."

Hjelmstad continued, "We hope the day provided a comprehensive look at SRT's role in delivering telecommunications that national defense, regional healthcare, the City of Minot, and our entire service area rely on. We also hope it illuminated real benefits of Universal Service investment and broadband connectivity – not just for every person across north-central North Dakota as they live their best lives in their own communities, but for the strength of our nation as a whole."

SRT Communications, headquartered in Minot, North Dakota, is the state's largest telecommunications cooperative. Established in 1951, SRT employs roughly 160 people and serves more than 26,000 customers across north central North Dakota. SRT earned the distinction as a Certified Gig-Capable Provider in 2017. Services include high-speed fiber internet, phone, and security/surveillance systems for home and business. Learn more at www.srt.com.

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