

# NORTH METRO TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION MEETING

June 16, 2021

6:00 p.m.

1301 81<sup>st</sup> Ave NE

Spring Lake Park, Minnesota

## AGENDA

1. Call to Order/Roll Call
2. Public Comments
3. Changes to the Agenda
4. Consent Agenda [pp. 1-12](#)
  - a. Minutes of regular meeting of May 19, 2021
  - b. Minutes of Operations Committee meeting of June 1, 2021
  - c. Minutes of Executive Committee meeting of June 2, 2021
  - d. May 2021 financial reports and bill list
5. Executive Director Report
  - a. Monthly Report [pp. 13-20](#)
  - b. 2022 NMTC Budget [pp. 21-33](#)
6. Legal Counsel Report [pp. 34-38](#)
  - a. Monthly Report
7. Old Business
8. New Business
  - a. Summer Meeting Schedule
9. Recommended Reading [pp. 39-48](#)
10. Community Calendar
  - A. Next Meeting Dates:
    - a. Operations Committee – July 6, 2021
    - b. Executive Committee – July 7, 2021
    - c. Cable Commission – July 21, 2021
11. Adjournment

# **NORTH METRO TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION**

## **UNAPPROVED MINUTES**

**Commission Meeting – May 19, 2021**

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Chair B. Nelson called the regular meeting of the North Metro Telecommunications Commission to order at 6:00 p.m.

### **ROLL CALL**

**Directors Present:** Julie Jeppson; Blaine, D. Love; Centerville, Dale Stoesz; Lino Lakes, Bob Nelson; Spring Lake Park, Jesse Wilken; Ham Lake, Brandon Winge; Lexington

**Directors Absent:** Steve McChesney; Circle Pines

**Others Present:** Heidi Arnson; Executive Director, Mike Bradley; Legal Counsel, Greg Emmerich; CPA

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

### **CHANGES TO THE AGENDA**

There were no changes to the agenda.

### **CONSENT AGENDA**

- **Minutes, Bill Lists, Financial Reports**

The March 17, 2021 NMTC meeting minutes, April 6, 2021 Operations Committee meeting minutes, April 7 Executive Committee Minutes and the March and April bill lists and financial reports were approved as presented. **Motion for approval made by D. Stoesz. Second, D. Love. Motion passed unanimously.**

### **2020 AUDIT PRESENTATION**

G. Emmerich, of Harrington, Langer and Associates, reviewed the 2020 North Metro Telecommunications Commission annual financial report. No abnormalities were found and the Commission is in a strong financial position.

**MOTION:** To approve the 2020 North Metro Telecommunications Commission annual financial report as presented. **Motion for approval made by: D. Stoesz. Second: J. Jeppson. Motion approved.**

### **REPORT OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

H. Arnson reported on the following items:

- North Metro TV is moving toward more normal operations. The facility usage restrictions will be eased on June 1<sup>st</sup>, there will be a return to live class instruction, and the production crews are excited to cover city parades and festivals, USA Cup Soccer, and in-person high school graduations.
- Staff has been working with Municipal Captioning Inc., a firm that consults with local governments and community television operators on equipment and services, to narrow down the best options for introducing closed captioning to the system. A recommendation will be made in June, during the 2022 budgeting process.
- NMTV will begin providing staff to record Centerville City meetings beginning in June. News Director, Danika Peterson, and Video Engineer, Matt Waldron, have spent a couple of days familiarizing themselves with the new equipment, making sure everything is functioning as it should, and working with city staff on camera settings and graphics. A freelancer has just been hired to staff the meetings, and will also require training.
- First quarter franchise and PEG fees were received, from Comcast. While both were down slightly from the previous quarter, the amounts were encouraging.

### **REPORT OF LEGAL COUNSEL**

M. Bradley reported on the following items:

- The Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals heard oral arguments regarding the appeal of the FCC's Third Report and Order. A decision is expected within the next two months.
- The Commission has submitted a renewal franchise to Comcast.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

There was no old business.

**NEW BUSINESS**

There was no new business.

**COMMUNITY CALENDAR**

Upcoming meetings include:

1. The Operations Committee on June 1, 2021
2. The Executive Committee Meeting on June 2, 2021
3. The Cable Commission Meeting on June 16, 2021

**ADJOURN**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:14 p.m. **Motion for approval made by D. Stoesz. Second, B. Winge. Motion passed unanimously.**

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Julie Jeppson; Secretary, NMTC

**NORTH METRO TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
UNAPPROVED OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES**

Tuesday, June 1, 2021

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting began at 11:06 a.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

M. Wolfe, P. Antonen, S. Cotton, B. Petracek, D. Webster

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

M. Statz, D. Buchholtz

**OTHERS PRESENT**

H. Arnson

**APPROVAL OF MEETING NOTES**

The meeting notes of May 4, 2021 were approved by consensus.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT**

- H. Arnson presented the recommended 2022 NMTC budget. The discussion began with an explanation of the variables that could possibly affect estimated income, including the recent decision by the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals regarding the FCC's Third Report and Order, and franchise renewal. Possible areas for cost reductions included personnel, benefits, and capital expenditures. A COLA increase of up to 2.75% was budgeted, but can be revisited if necessary. Corresponding tax savings could also result from any COLA changes. A \$30 per month/per employee increase was included for the staff benefits package. There was no increase in the benefits package for 2021, so NMTC staff's benefits package value remains well below the average value of the benefits packages of Member Cities. The remainder of the operating budget remained near or below the 2021 budget. Capital expenditures that could be delayed included the purchase of one channel server instead of two. The group also discussed the possibility of delaying the introduction of closed captioning. The other income variables discussed included reserve funds and fees returned to Cities. It was noted that the Operating Reserve had been increased with the intention of covering income reductions during a transition period. PEG fees returned to Cities were budgeted at \$225,000. The fees could be restricted to capital purchases with a new franchise, and should be utilized for capital expenditures and reserves. The Committee approved the budget as presented, with the possibility that it may need to be revisited should income levels not meet expectations.

**OLD BUSINESS**

- There was no old business.

**NEW BUSINESS**

- There was no new business.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:05 p.m.

## **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES**

Meeting of June 2, 2021

Executive Cmte. Present: Dale Stoesz; Lino Lakes, Brandon Winge; Lexington, Julie Jeppson; Blaine

Absent: Bob Nelson; Spring Lake Park

Others Present: Heidi Arnson; Executive Director

### **CALL TO ORDER**

The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**A motion to approve the May 5, 2021 Executive Committee meeting minutes was made by J. Jeppson. Second, B. Winge. Motion passed unanimously.**

### **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR / OPERATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT**

- H. Arnson presented the recommended 2022 NMTC budget. The discussion began with an explanation of the variables that could possibly affect estimated income, including the recent decision by the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals regarding the FCC's Third Report and Order, and franchise renewal. Possible areas for cost reductions included personnel, benefits, and capital expenditures. A COLA increase of up to 2.75% was budgeted, but can be revisited if necessary. Corresponding tax savings could also result from any COLA changes. A \$30 per month/per employee increase was included for the staff benefits package. There was no increase in the benefits package for 2021, so NMTC staff's benefits package value remains well below the average value of the benefits packages of Member Cities. The remainder of the operating budget remained near or below the 2021 budget. Capital expenditures that could be delayed included the purchase of one channel server instead of two. The group also discussed the possibility of delaying the introduction of closed captioning. The other income variables discussed included reserve funds and fees returned to Cities. It was noted that the Operating Reserve had been increased with the intention of covering income reductions during a transition period. PEG fees returned to Cities were budgeted at \$225,000. The fees could be restricted to capital purchases with a new franchise, and should be utilized for capital expenditures and equipment reserves. The Operations Committee approved the budget as presented, with the possibility that it may need to be revisited should income levels not meet expectations. They recommended that the Cable Commission do the same. The Executive Committee approved recommending the budget as presented, to the full Commission, with the understanding that it may need to be revised.

**MOTION:** To recommend approval of the 2022 NMTC budget as presented. **Motion made by D. Stoesz. Second, J. Jeppson. Motion passed unanimously.**

**OLD BUSINESS**

- There was no old business.

**NEW BUSINESS**

- There was no new business.

**ADJOURN**

**Motion to adjourn made by J. Jeppson. Second, B. Winge. Motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 6:55 p.m.**

**NORTH METRO TELECOMMUNICATION  
BILL LIST**

MAY 2021

<b>Date</b>	<b>Check #</b>	<b>Payee</b>	<b>Amount</b>	
MAY	COMBINED	PAYROLL	42,284.70	<b>WAGES</b>
MAY	COMBINED	IRS/US PAYABLE	13,727.91	<b>WAGES</b>
MAY	COMBINED	MN REVENUE PAYABLE	2,328.55	<b>WAGES</b>
MAY	COMBINED	PERA PAYABLE	7,642.25	<b>WAGES</b>
MAY	COMBINED	PEACHTREE	46.25	<b>MONTHLY SERVICE</b>
MAY	COMBINED	DISCOVERY BENEFITS	1,177.88	<b>HEALTH SAVINGS EMPLOYEE</b>
13853	5/5/21	City of Blaine	122,493.80	<b>2016A GO BONDS</b>
13854	5/5/21	City of Circle Pines	10,893.90	<b>2016A GO BONDS</b>
13855	5/5/21	City of Centerville	7,596.16	<b>2016A GO BONDS</b>
13856	5/5/21	City of Ham Lake	31,749.23	<b>2016A GO BONDS</b>
13857	5/5/21	City of Lexington	4,071.00	<b>2016A GO BONDS</b>
13858	5/5/21	City of Lino Lakes	37,525.95	<b>2016A GO BONDS</b>
13859	5/5/21	City of Spring Lake Park	13,099.97	<b>2016A GO BONDS</b>
13860	5/5/21	Terry Tronson	187.89	<b>EXPENSES</b>
13861	5/5/21	Richard D. Larson	438.75	<b>EXPENSES-VACUUM</b>
13862	5/5/21	Rick Larson	396.36	<b>JANITORIAL</b>
13863	5/9/21	Coastal Wintergreen LLC	885.00	<b>MONTHLY SERVICE</b>
13864	5/10/21	Harrington Langer & Associates	15,000.00	<b>ANNUAL AUDIT-PARTIAL</b>
13865	5/11/21	Lifesaver Fire Protection, LLC	1,154.00	<b>5YR INSP/ATTIC LEAK/COMPRESSOR</b>
13866	5/4/21	Bradley Law, LLC	5,225.00	<b>LEGAL-GENERAL</b>
13867	5/19/21	Z Systems	718.00	<b>STUDIO EXPENSES</b>
13868	5/20/21	Commissioner of Transportation	116.67	<b>DRONE REGISTRATION</b>
13869	5/20/21	Z Systems	7,214.69	<b>MAINTENANCE CONTRACT</b>
13870	5/26/21	Naomi Bray	500.00	<b>STIPEND</b>
13871	5/28/21	Michael S. Johnson	31.36	<b>MILEAGE</b>
EFILE	5/15/21	Chase Visa Card Services	3,187.14	<b>OS/MEDIA/STUDIO/SFTWR/STAMPS</b>
EFILE	5/20/21	Chase Visa Card Services	2,147.49	<b>ANNUAL REMOTE</b>
EFILE	5/1/21	Authorize.Net	34.29	<b>MONTHLY SERVICE</b>
EFILE	5/1/21	Virtual Merchant Credit Card	10.00	<b>MONTHLY SERVICE</b>
EPAY-01	5/1/21	Principal Financial Group	485.79	<b>STD/LTD/LIFE/ADD</b>
EPAY-02	5/2/21	POPP TELECOM	219.52	<b>MONTHLY SERVICE</b>
EPAY-02	5/4/21	Speedway	126.29	<b>GAS/OIL</b>
EPAY-03	5/3/21	Comcast	539.67	<b>MONTHLY SERVICE</b>
EPAY-04	5/3/21	T-Mobile	102.16	<b>MONTHLY SERVICE</b>
EPAY-06	5/7/21	Circle K Station Stores	144.06	<b>GAS/OIL</b>
EPAY-07	5/12/21	AT&T Wireless	427.47	<b>MONTHLY SERVICE</b>
EPAY-08	5/14/21	Republic Services	256.33	<b>MONTHLY SERVICE</b>
EPAY-09	5/15/21	CenterPoint Energy	53.61	<b>MONTHLY SERVICE</b>
EPAY-10	5/15/21	Comcast Business 1000M/1000M	1,237.44	<b>MONTHLY SERVICE</b>
EPAY-11	5/16/21	U.S. Bank Card Service	359.78	<b>FEES/ZOOM/AD/MRKT/DROPBOX</b>
EPAY-12	5/22/21	HealthPartners	12,136.76	<b>HEALTH/DENTAL</b>
EPAY-13	5/26/21	City of Blaine-utilities	51.41	<b>MONTHLY SERVICE</b>
EPAY-14	5/26/21	Connexus Energy	2,282.61	<b>MONTHLY SERVICE</b>
APRIL SALES TAX	5/15/21	MN Dept. of Revenue	140.00	<b>SALES TAX</b>

**350,447.09**



# North Metro Telecommunications Commission

## Balance Sheet

May 31, 2021

### ASSETS

#### Current Assets

Cash - Checking Account	\$	2,412,703.27
Petty Cash		150.00
A/R - NMTC		186,065.07
Prepaid Insurance - NMTC		11,527.00

Total Current Assets 2,610,445.34

#### Property and Equipment

Office Equipment - NMTC	1,467,850.06
Accum Deprec - NMTC	(3,093,958.47)
Bond Equipment 2016	1,985,000.00
Building-Polk/125	1,572,799.17
Land-Polk/125	225,700.00

Total Property and Equipment 2,157,390.76

#### Other Assets

Deferred Out Related/Pension	41,394.00
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Total Other Assets 41,394.00

Total Assets \$ 4,809,230.10

### LIABILITIES AND CAPITAL

#### Current Liabilities

A/P - NMTC	\$	7,713.67
Accrued Payroll Taxes & W/H's		449.54
PERA - CORRECTIONS		310.09
Garnished Wages		86.40
Garnished Wages		(86.40)
PERA PAYABLE - PRIOR		(3,371.42)
Accrued Vacation		110,083.47
Accrued Wages		2,711.36
Franchise Fee App		895,288.37
Due to City of Blaine		447,038.00
Due to City of Centerville		27,722.00
Due to City of Circle Pines		39,756.50
Due to City of Ham Lake		115,868.00
Due to City of Lexington		14,767.00
Due to City of Lino Lakes		136,950.00
Due to City of Spring Lake Par		47,808.00
Deferred In Related/Pension		36,251.00

Total Current Liabilities 1,879,345.58

#### Long-Term Liabilities

Net Pension Liability	569,568.00
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Total Long-Term Liabilities 569,568.00

Total Liabilities 2,448,913.58

#### Capital

Net Equity	368,870.87
Net Equity - Media Ctr	(206,243.34)
Net Equity - NMTC	2,517,656.37
Net Income	(319,967.38)

Total Capital 2,360,316.52

Total Liabilities & Capital \$ 4,809,230.10

# North Metro Telecommunications Comm

## Cash Receipts Journal

For the Period From May 1, 2021 to May 31, 2021

Date	Transaction Ref	Line Description	Debit Amnt	Credit Amnt
5/17/21	COMMERCIAL PROD	COMMERCIAL PRODUCTION-BLAINE HS		460.00
		COMMERCIAL PRODUCTION-CENTENNIAL HS		1,000.00
		Miscellaneous receipts	1,460.00	
5/18/21	TAPE DUBS-CHECKS	TAPE DUBS-CHECKS		58.92
		Miscellaneous receipts	58.92	
5/26/21	COMMERCIAL PROD	COMMERCIAL PRODUCTION-STREAMING		300.00
		Miscellaneous receipts	300.00	
5/29/21	MAY CC SALES-SQUARE	MAY CREDIT CARD SALES-SQUARE		2.14
		MAY CREDIT CARD	0.15	
		SALES-SQUARE-FEES		
		Credit Card Sales	1.99	
5/30/21	MAY CC SALES-SQUARE	MAY CREDIT CARD SALES-SQUARE		1,477.25
		MAY CREDIT CARD	37.63	
		SALES-SQUARE-FEES		
		Credit Card Sales	1,439.62	
5/31/21	INTEREST	INTEREST COMMISSION CHECKING		21.58
		INTEREST - COMMISSION	21.58	
			<b>3,319.89</b>	<b>3,319.89</b>

# North Metro Telecommunications Comm

## Check Register

For the Period From May 1, 2021 to May 31, 2021

Filter Criteria includes: 1) Accounts Payable only. Report order is by Date.

Check #	Date	Payee	Amount
EFILE	5/1/21	Discovery Benefits	22.50
EFILE	5/1/21	Authorize.Net	34.29
EFILE	5/1/21	Virtual Merchant Credit Card	10.00
EPAY-01	5/1/21	Principal Financial Group	485.79
EPAY-02	5/2/21	POPP TELECOM	219.52
EPAY-04	5/3/21	T-Mobile	102.16
EPAY-03	5/3/21	Comcast	539.67
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13866	5/4/21	Bradley Law, LLC	5,225.00
EFILE	5/5/21	Discovery Benefits	577.69
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13858	5/5/21	City of Lino Lakes	37,525.95
13859	5/5/21	City of Spring Lake Park	13,099.97
13860	5/5/21	Terry Tronson	187.89
13861	5/5/21	Richard D. Larson	438.75
13862	5/5/21	Rick Larson	396.36
EFILE	5/7/21	MN Dept. of Revenue	1,140.03
EFILE	5/7/21	Public Employees Retirement	3,705.86
EFILE	5/7/21	IRS/US BANK	6,402.07
EPAY-06	5/7/21	Circle K Station Stores	144.06
PEACH	5/7/21	Peachtree/Sage Software	22.20
13863	5/9/21	Coastal Wintergreen LLC	885.00
13864	5/10/21	Harrington Langer & Associates	15,000.00
13865	5/11/21	Lifesaver Fire Protection, LLC	1,154.00
EPAY-07	5/12/21	AT&T Wireless	427.47

# North Metro Telecommunications Comm

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EPAY-08	5/14/21	Republic Services	256.33
EPAY-09	5/15/21	CenterPoint Energy	53.61
APRIL SALES TAX	5/15/21	MN Dept. of Revenue	140.00
EFILE	5/15/21	Chase Visa Card Services	3,187.14
EPAY-10	5/15/21	Comcast Business 1000M/1000M	1,237.44
EPAY-11	5/16/21	U.S. Bank Card Service	359.78
EFILE	5/19/21	Discovery Benefits	577.69
13867	5/19/21	Z Systems	718.00
EFILE	5/20/21	Chase Visa Card Services	2,147.49
13868	5/20/21	Commissioner of Transportation	116.67
13869	5/20/21	Z Systems	7,214.69
EFILE	5/21/21	MN Dept. of Revenue	1,139.60
EFILE	5/21/21	Public Employees Retirement	3,705.86
EFILE	5/21/21	IRS/US BANK	6,400.07
PEACH	5/21/21	Peachtree/Sage Software	24.05
EPAY-12	5/22/21	HealthPartners	12,136.76
EPAY-13	5/26/21	City of Blaine-utilities	51.41
EPAY-14	5/26/21	Connexus Energy	2,282.61
13870	5/26/21	Naomi Bray	500.00
13871	5/28/21	Michael S. Johnson	31.36
EFILE	5/31/21	Public Employees Retirement	142.76
EFILE	5/31/21	MN Dept. of Revenue	48.92
EFILE	5/31/21	IRS/US BANK	829.85
EFILE	5/31/21	IRS/US BANK	95.92
EFILE	5/31/21	Public Employees Retirement	87.77
<b>Total</b>			<b><u>308,162.39</u></b>

# North Metro Telecommunications Comm

## General Journal

For the Period From May 1, 2021 to May 31, 2021

Date	Reference	Trans Description	Debit Amt	Credit Amt
5/1/21	ACCRUED VAC/COM/SICK	ACCRUED VAC/COMP/SICK ACCRUED VAC/COMP/SICK	107,888.88	107,888.88
5/31/21	ACCRUED DEPRECIATION	ACCRUED DEPRECIATION ACCRUED DEPRECIATION	12,900.00	12,900.00
5/31/21	ACCRUED VAC/COM/SICK	ACCRUED VAC/COMP/SICK ACCRUED VAC/COMP/SICK	110,083.47	110,083.47
5/31/21	ACCRUED WAGES	ACCRUED WAGES ACCRUED WAGES	2,711.36	2,711.36
	<b>Total</b>		<b>233,583.71</b>	<b>233,583.71</b>

# North Metro TV

May 2021 Update

## Program Production

In May, a total of 78 **new programs** were produced utilizing the North Metro facilities, funds, and services. This constitutes **84:00:00 hours of new programming**.

- 19 programs were produced by the public
- 50 programs were produced by NMTV staff
- 9 programs were produced by City staff



## Van Shoots

The HD production truck was utilized for 46:00:00 hours of production in May. The following events were produced live and recorded for additional playback:

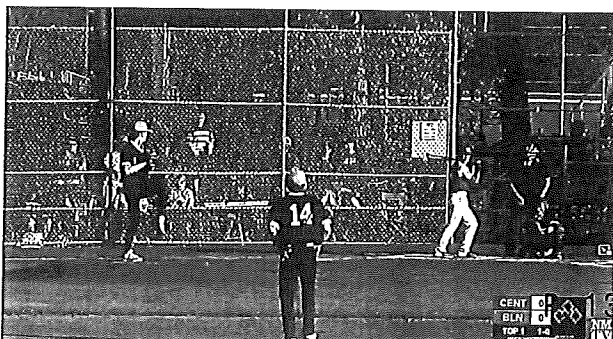
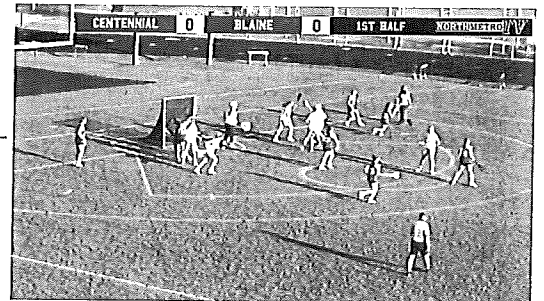
- Boys Volleyball: Blaine vs. Spring Lake Park
- Adapted Softball: Anoka-Hennepin vs. Centennial
- Baseball: Centennial vs. Spring Lake Park
- Boys Lacrosse: Blaine vs. Centennial
- Baseball: Centennial vs. Blaine
- Softball: Centennial vs. Blaine
- Girls Lacrosse: Blaine vs. Spring Lake Park
- Softball: Blaine vs. Spring Lake Park



## vMix Live Streaming Shoots

The vMix single camera production system was utilized to record/transmit live four high school sporting events. The vMix system requires significantly fewer staff members, than the production truck. vMix crews are spread out over multiple locations and connected via the internet.

- Boys Volleyball: Centennial vs. Spring Lake Park
- Softball: Centennial vs. Spring Lake Park
- Girls Lacrosse: Centennial vs. Blaine
- Girls Lacrosse: Spring Lake Park vs. Centennial



## Most Viewed YouTube Sporting Event

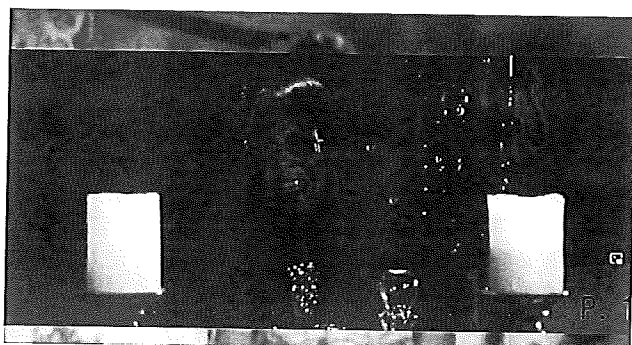
Baseball: Centennial vs. Blaine  
539 Views

## Live Workshops

Workshop	Instructor	Organization	Students
<b>Live Lecture</b> - Star Wars: Behind the Scenes of a Galaxy Far, Far Away	Eric Houston	Elk River Community Education (fee)	5
<b>Live Lecture</b> - Star Wars: Behind the Scenes of a Galaxy Far, Far Away	Eric Houston	Robbinsdale Community Education (fee)	7
<b>2 Live Workshops</b>			<b>12 Students</b>

## VOD Workshop Views

Workshop	Type	# of Views	Hours Viewed
The Immortal Ingrid Pitt	Mini	39	1.5 hrs
The Oscars: 90 Years of the Academy Awards	Full	19	5.5 hrs
Tim Curry Horror Picture Show	Mini	12	.25 hrs
Back to the Eighties: The Decade's Biggest...	Full	12	4.5 hrs
James Bond: 50 Years of 007	Full	5	2.5 hrs
Eurovision: A Celebration	Mini	N/A	N/A
Yabba-Dabba-Dol! The Fantastic World of Hanna...	Full	1236	128.75 hrs
Superman: The Man of Steel on the Silver Screen	Full	2	1.5 hrs
The Fantastic Four on the Silver Screen	Mini	9	.75 hrs
Christmas in Hollywood	Full	4	1 hr
TV's Greatest Christmas Specials	Full	11	.25 hrs
Chicago Christmas Classics	Mini	118	4 hrs
Let's Go Ghostbusters: Filmation's Haunted Heroes	Mini	22	.75 hrs
Monster Movies of the 40s and 50s	Full	704	97 hrs
Monster Movies of the 20s and 30s	Full	251	48 hrs
The Presidency on Film JQA to JFK	Full	9	.25 hrs
Monstervision: The Legend of Joe Bob Briggs	Mini	54	4.5 hrs
The Cult of Caroline Munro	Mini	1747	73 hrs
The Marilyn Monroe Story	Full	323	56.5 hrs
Nick at Nite: A TV Viewer's Dream	Mini	81	2 hrs
The Birth of Animation: Mickey, Bugs, and Betty...	Full	11	1.75 hrs
Hollywood Goes to War: World War II	Full	21	5 hrs
Come on Down: Game Shows of the 70s and 80s	Full	41	5.5 hrs
The Quiz Show Scandals and Other Game Shows...	Full	102	27 hrs
The Three Stooges: Comedy's Heavy Hitters	Full	10	.25 hrs
The Marx Brothers: Groucho, Harpo, Chico...	Full	548	59.25 hrs
Mary Pickford: The World's First Movie Star	Full	20	5.75 hrs
Hollywood Goes to the Dogs: Lassie, Benji...	Full	11	1 hr
<b>28 VOD Workshops</b>		<b>5,422 Total Views</b>	<b>587.5 Hours Viewed</b>



### Most Viewed YouTube Workshop

The Cult of Caroline Munro  
1,747 Views

## YouTube Stats

Month	Viewers	Videos Viewed	Hours Watched	New Subscribers	Total Impressions
January	23,800	38,487	3,620.2	132	532,400
February	21,198	34,307	3,201	103	507,655
March	26,738	46,359	5,147	145	668,404
April	20,378	28,623	1,653	84	462,844
May	26,205	39,801	4,364	141	559,725
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>118,319</b>	<b>187,577</b>	<b>17,985.2</b>	<b>605</b>	<b>2,731,028</b>

## NMTV Website Stats

Month	Number of Users	Number of Views	Live Stream Views
January	6,103	20,923	1,324
February	5,860	16,285	1,692
March	5,347	14,476	2,182
April	4,313	9,558	599
May	3,534	8,928	845
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>25,157</b>	<b>70,170</b>	<b>6,642</b>

## Home Movie Transfers

Home movie transfers have become one of our most popular services. Residents can transfer their family videos themselves for free, or pay NMTV to do it. NMTV can also transfer film, slides, and photos for a fee.

Month	Hours Transferred	Tapes	Film Reels	DVDs	Photos/Slides	Fees Paid
January	387	74	136	3	516	\$1,927.20
February	358	77	101	15	1,097	\$688.06
March	587.50	153	76	73	850	\$3,007.08
April	429	134	52	92	860	\$1,550.12
May	302.5	92	83	0	300	\$1,916.48
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>2,064</b>	<b>530</b>	<b>448</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>3,623</b>	<b>\$9,088.94</b>

## Production Highlights

### NMTV News Highlights

Each week Danika Peterson and Rusty Ray create a news program that highlights events, people, issues, and information important to citizens of our Member Cities. Some May highlights include:

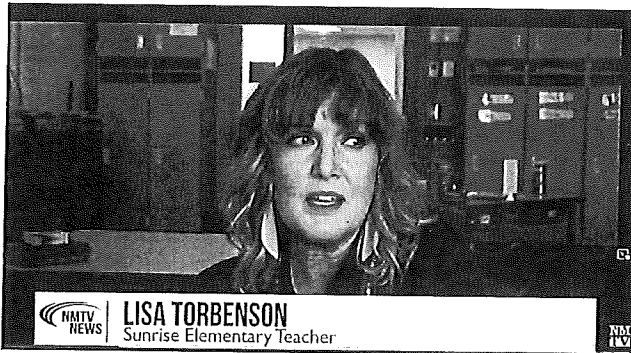
- Anoka Recycling Business Helps Donate to Haven for Heroes
- Blaine Families Honored for Efforts to Keep Storm Drains Clean
- Street Sweepings Reused as Often as Possible in Blaine





- Master Gardener: Planting MN Midget Cantaloupe in Pots
- Master Gardener: Planting Potatoes in Containers
- 3M Open Ready to Welcome Fans Back to PGA Tour Stop in Blaine
- Master Gardener: Compost Pile Update
- Anoka Ramsey Counties to Partner in Plans for Improved Freeway Interchange Near Lino Lakes
- Master Gardener: Seed Tape
- Centerville Extends Public Hearing Over Disputed Development Plans
- Restaurants Eager to Welcome Back Full Dining Rooms
- Anoka County Master Gardeners Spread Expertise Among Volunteer Projects
- Blaine Teenager Wins Acclaim for Science Project About COVID 19 Testing
- Lino Lakes Water Rates Could Increase in Next 5 Years
- Mary Ann Young Center Ready to Resume More Normal Activities
- Oprah Recognizes Blaine Teacher for Resilience
- Roosevelt Community Pool Ready for a Busy Summer in Blaine
- MnDot Asks Drivers to Keep an Eye Out for Work Zones
- Master Gardener: Apple Tree Planting in the Backyard
- Anoka County Teams With Providers to Get Residents Vaccinated
- Spring Lake Park Officially Welcomes HyVee
- Bunker Beach Open After More Than a Year

In addition to daily playbacks of North Metro TV News on the cable systems, there are 868 local stories archived for viewers on the NMTV YouTube channel. The channel can be accessed through the northmetrotv.com website.

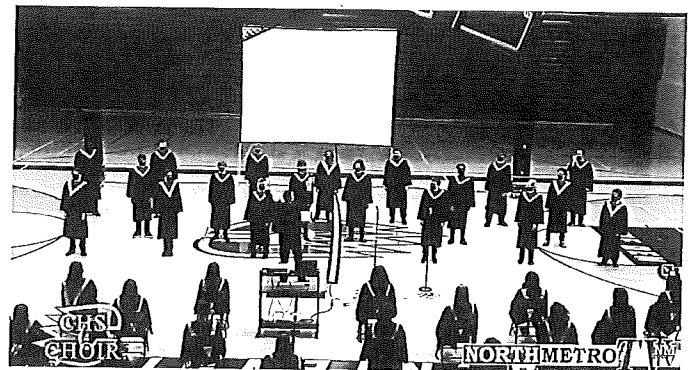


### Most Viewed YouTube News Story

Oprah Recognizes Blaine Teacher for Resilience  
278 Views

### Streaming Events for Schools

May was a popular month for live streaming school events. Blaine and Centennial High Schools hired NMTV to live stream six concerts, one play, and the Blaine High School Centers for Engineering, Mathematics, and Science class presentations. Because of copyright issues we do not put concerts or plays on NMTV channels, but we are happy to help schools stream their events on their own Youtube channels. Special Projects Coordinator, T.J. Tronson also helped Blaine staff with some editing and music insertion on a girls hockey awards ceremony recorded by the school. Although it was not school related, NMTV staff also streamed the Stepping Stones Live Gala from the Bunker Hills Event Center.



### Drone Update

The drone was utilized for several productions, in May, including the longest distance flight conducted by UAS certified pilot, T.J. Tronson, with the Inspire drone. A great deal of wetland footage was recorded, which will be utilized by the City of Blaine and the NMTV news department for upcoming stories. T.J. was also able to secure MnDot certification and licensure for flying drones near highways.



### Class Additions and Changes

Instructor, Eric Houston, worked with local partners, including Blaine Community Education, Spring Lake Park Community Education, and the Mary Ann Young Center to schedule in-person classes for this fall. Interest and comfort levels with in-person classes is on the rise, so Eric is working to get back to presenting all of his classes in-person. Several entities outside of our Member Cities are also scheduling classes for this fall. All classes provided for organizations outside of the Member Cities are done so for a fee.

"Thanks for offering such quality programs during the pandemic when people were looking for ways to stay interested and connected...thanks for presenting your creative, informative film clip presentations. They rock!"

-Shelley Johnson, Mary Ann Young Senior Center

### Fun NMTV Website Facts

Each month, Danika Peterson puts together a report documenting NMTV's website use and other statistics. Most of those numbers are incorporated throughout this report, but some don't really have a place. So...

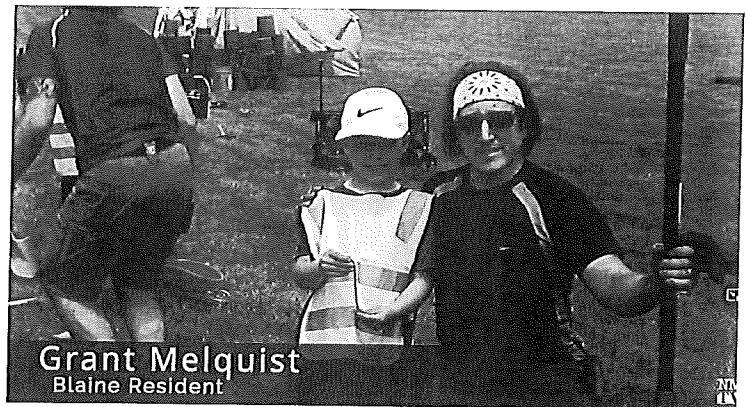
- ✓ Most popular video: **The Tail Gunner and the Navigator**. This is an Emmy Award winning documentary produced by previous NMTV staff member, Damian Kussian. It was produced about six years ago. It seemed to be most popular, this year, on Memorial Day. **It received 8,928 views.**
- ✓ Most popular live event: **The Blaine High School Orchestra Concert**. It received **1,103 views**, with **724 watching live**.
- ✓ 283 people live streamed the Lino Lakes city channel.

### City Productions

In May, Municipal Producer, Trevor Scholl, completed five productions. The shows included a series of videos for the City of Blaine, a ribbon cutting ceremony, and a business profile.

Programs completed include:

- Community Works With City to Plant Trees
- Blaine Police Department: Theft Awareness
- Blaine Property Markers Video
- Business Matters: Crunch Fitness
- STEM Builder Ribbon Cutting



New and ongoing projects include:

- Summer Mayor's minutes
- Bonfire safety
- Business profiles
- Quad Area Chamber of Commerce video
- BPD hearing impaired relations
- Lino Lakes public works profile
- Lino Lakes fire recruitment updates
- Circle Pines virtual tour

Trevor touches base with contacts on a regular basis and also encourages Cities to contact him whenever they have an idea for a new show.

### Public Access Programs

Title	Producer	Runtime
Rice Creek Watershed District Meeting	Theresa Stasica	01:19:53
Christ Lutheran Church (3 episodes)	Chance Amundson	02:54:06
Lovepower (6 episodes)	Rick Larson	06:00:00
The Power of Love (6 episodes)	Rick Larson	03:00:00
Oak Park Community Church (3 episodes)	David Turnidge	01:40:19
<b>19 New Programs</b>	<b>P. 17</b>	<b>14:54:18 New Hours</b>

## NMTV Staff Programs

Title	Producer	Runtime
Anoka County Board Meeting (5/11/21)	T.J. Tronson	00:51:10
Anoka County Board Meeting (5/25/21)	T.J. Tronson	00:54:39
NMTC Meeting (5/19/21)	T.J. Tronson	00:14:58
Blaine High School: Wizard of Oz (Live Stream)	T.J. Tronson	01:27:18
Blaine High School Spring Band Concert – Concert Band	T.J. Tronson	01:22:24
Blaine High School Spring Band Concert – Repertoire Band	T.J. Tronson	00:36:50
Blaine High School Spring Band Concert – Freshman Band	T.J. Tronson	00:39:16
Blaine High School – CEMS Presentations (Live Stream)	T.J. Tronson	01:38:19
Blaine Girls Hockey Awards	T.J. Tronson	01:34:18
NMTV News (4 episodes)	Danika Peterson/Rusty Ray	01:34:07
Business Matters: Crunch Fitness	Trevor Scholl	00:05:03
Tree Planting	Trevor Scholl	00:02:03
Blaine Police Department: Theft Awareness	Trevor Scholl	00:14:00
Blaine Property Markers	Trevor Scholl	00:10:00
STEM Builder Ribbon Cutting	Trevor Scholl	00:01:00
Boys Volleyball: Blaine/Spring Lake Park	Kenton Kipp/J. Millington	01:19:07
Adapted Softball: Anoka-Hennepin/Centennial	Kenton Kipp/J. Millington	01:23:49
Baseball: Centennial/Spring Lake Park	Kenton Kipp/J. Millington	01:46:07
Boys Lacrosse: Blaine/Centennial	Kenton Kipp/J. Millington	01:36:04
Baseball: Centennial/Blaine	Kenton Kipp/J. Millington	02:07:59
Softball: Centennial/Blaine	Kenton Kipp/J. Millington	01:45:07
Girls Lacrosse: Blaine/Spring Lake Park	Kenton Kipp/J. Millington	01:18:30
Softball: Blaine/Spring Lake Park	Kenton Kipp/J. Millington	01:47:54
Boys Volleyball: Centennial/Spring Lake Park	Kenton Kipp/J. Millington	01:54:48
Softball: Centennial/Spring Lake Park	Kenton Kipp/J. Millington	02:08:17
Girls Lacrosse: Centennial/Blaine	Kenton Kipp/J. Millington	01:17:08
Girls Lacrosse: Spring Lake Park/Centennial	Kenton Kipp/J. Millington	01:16:29
Centennial High School Choir Cabaret Night ( School Youtube channel)	Kenton Kipp/J. Millington	01:18:10
Centennial High School Encore Choir Concert (School Youtube channel)	Kenton Kipp/J. Millington	02:15:59
Sports Den Winter Wrap: Blaine Girls Basketball	Kenton Kipp/J. Millington	00:13:37
Sports Den Winter Wrap: Centennial Boys Hockey	Kenton Kipp/J. Millington	00:05:32
<b>34 New Programs</b>		<b>35:00:02 New Hours</b>

## City Meetings

Title	Producer	Runtime
Blaine City Council Meeting (5/3/21)	T.J. Tronson	01:23:47
Blaine Traffic Commission Meeting (5/4/21)	T.J. Tronson	01:37:29
Blaine Planning Commission Meeting (5/11/21)	T.J. Tronson	01:06:19
Blaine City Council Meeting (5/17/21)	P. 18 Trevor Scholl	01:28:47

Blaine Park Board Meeting (5/25/21)	Trevor Scholl	01:11:58
Centerville Planning & Zoning Commission Meeting (5/4/21)	Centerville Staff	02:22:11
Centerville Special City Council Meeting (5/4/21)	Centerville Staff	00:54:11
Centerville Park & Rec Meeting (5/5/21)	Centerville Staff	02:07:17
Centerville City Council Meeting (5/12/21)	Centerville Staff	05:11:49
Centerville EDA Meeting (5/19/21)	Centerville Staff	02:34:54
Centerville City Council Meeting (5/26/21)	Centerville Staff	02:45:51
Circle Pines Park Board Meeting (5/4/21)	Patrick Willson	00:39:59
Circle Pines City Council Meeting (5/11/21)	Trevor Scholl	01:15:08
Circle Pines Utility Commission Meeting (5/19/21)	Eric Houston	00:58:25
Circle Pines City Council Meeting (5/25/21)	Patrick Willson	01:15:32
Ham Lake City Council Meeting (5/3/21)	Patrick Willson	00:34:11
Ham Lake City Council Meeting (5/17/21)	T.J. Tronson	00:05:42
Ham Lake Planning Commission Meeting (5/24/21)	Patrick Wilson	01:06:17
Lexington City Council Meeting (5/6/21)	Lexington Staff	00:23:34
Lexington City Council Meeting (5/20/21)	Lexington Staff	00:25:55
Lino Lakes City Council Meeting (5/10/21)	Anne Serwe	00:55:32
Lino Lakes Planning & Zoning Meeting (5/12/21)	Lino Lakes Staff	01:23:09
Lino Lakes City Council Meeting (5/24/21)	Anne Serwe	00:20:45
Spring Lake Park City Council Meeting (5/3/21)	Isaac Quick	00:52:01
Spring Lake Park City Council Meeting (5/24/21)	Isaac Quick	00:58:30
<b>25 New Programs</b>		<b>33:59:13 New Hours</b>

If you have any questions or comments regarding this monthly report please contact Heidi Arnson at 763.231.2801 or [harnson@northmetrotv.com](mailto:harnson@northmetrotv.com).

# NORTH METRO TV

## Production Statistics 2021

Programming Statistics	J	F	M	A	M	JU	A	S	O	N	D	21 Total	21 Average
<b>Cablecast Programs</b>	2478.00	2262.00	2542.00	2186.00	2335.00							11803.00	983.58
Cablecast Hours	1985.50	1945.50	2090.75	2085.50	2275.50							10382.75	865.23
<b>Programs Produced - Public</b>	18.00	12.00	19.00	15.00	15.00							79.00	6.58
Program Hours Produced - Public	14.00	10.00	15.00	11.00	12.00							62.00	5.17
Prog. Produced - Affiliated Public	6.00	6.00	8.00	5.00	4.00							29.00	2.42
Prog. Hours Produced - Affil. Public	6.00	5.00	6.50	6.50	3.00							27.00	2.25
<b>Programs Produced - City Staff</b>	10.00	6.00	6.00	7.00	9.00							38.00	3.17
Prog. Hours Produced - City Staff	14.50	12.00	6.25	20.50	18.00							71.25	5.94
<b>Programs Produced - NMTV Staff</b>	49.00	46.00	99.00	37.00	50.00							281.00	23.42
Prog. Hours Produced - NMTV Staff	39.50	39.25	53.00	34.00	51.00							216.75	18.06
<b>Total Public Programs Produced</b>	24.00	18.00	27.00	20.00	19.00							108.00	9.00
Total Staff Programs Produced	59.00	52.00	105.00	44.00	59.00							319.00	26.58
Total Internal Programs Produced	83.00	70.00	132.00	64.00	78.00							427.00	35.58
% Staff Produced Programs	71.08%	74.29%	79.55%	68.75%	75.64%							74.71%	74.71%
% Public Produced Programs	28.92%	25.71%	20.45%	31.25%	24.36%							25.29%	25.29%
<b>External Programs Submitted</b>	15.00	27.00	24.00	23.00	18.00							107.00	8.92
External Program Hours	11.50	19.50	21.25	20.25	15.00							87.50	7.29
<b>Total New Programs</b>	98.00	97.00	156.00	87.00	96.00							534.00	44.50
<b>Public Equipment Usage Statistics</b>													
Facility Hours Available	105.00	105.00	140.00	119.00	112.00							581.00	48.42
Camera Check Outs	5.00	4.00	7.00	6.00	3.00							25.00	2.08
Studio A	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00							0.00	0.00
% of Available Time	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%							0.00%	0.00%
Studio B	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	6.50							6.50	0.54
% of Available Time	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	5.80%							1.12%	1.12%
Editing	16.00	17.00	19.50	18.00	15.50							86.00	7.17
% of Available Time	15.24%	16.19%	13.93%	15.13%	13.84%							14.80%	3.22%
Number of Public Facility Users	5.00	2.00	4.00	6.00	9.00%							17.09	1.42
<b>Total Hours of Public Use</b>	49.00	26.00	49.00	84.00	29.50							237.50	19.79
<b>Production Van/Mix Statistics</b>													
Number of Van Shoots	0.00	0.00	12.00	3.00	8.00							23.00	1.92
Total Van Usage Hours	0.00	0.00	67.50	18.00	46.00							131.50	10.96
Number of Mix Shoots	13.00	14.00	11.00	3.00	4.00							0.17	0.16
Intern Hours	27.50	10.00	17.00	10.00	20.25							84.75	7.06
Volunteer Hours	0.00	0.00	4.00	8.00	4.00							16.00	1.33
<b>Workshop Statistics</b>													
Number of Live Workshops	2.00	3.00	2.00	4.00	2.00							13.00	1.08
Number of Students at Live Workshops	23.00	27.00	29.00	30.00	12.00							121.00	10.08
<b>VOD Students All Workshops</b>	3677.00	2640.00	3908.00	5394.00	5422.00							21041.00	1753.42
<b>Media Transfer Statistics</b>													
Total Transfer Equip. Usage Hours	387.00	358.00	587.50	429.00	302.50							2084.00	172.00
Tapes Transferred	74.00	77.00	153.00	134.00	92.00							530.00	44.17
Film Reels Transferred	136.00	101.00	76.00	52.00	83.00							363.00	30.92
Slides/Photos Transferred	516.00	1097.00	850.00	860.00	300.00							183.00	15.25
DVDs Copied	3.00	15.00	73.00	92.00	0.00							192.00	16.00
Transfer Hours By Public	10.50	32.00	74.00	40.50	35.00							1872.00	156.00
Transfer Hours By Staff	376.50	326.00	513.50	388.50	287.50								
<b>NMTV YouTube Statistics</b>													
Number of Viewers	23800.00	21198.00	26738.00	20378.00	26205.00							118319.00	9859.92
Total Videos Viewed	38487.00	34307.00	46359.00	28623.00	39801.00							187577.00	15631.42
Total Hours Watched	3620.20	3201.00	5147.00	1653.00	4364.00							17985.20	1498.77
Number of New Subscribers	132.00	103.00	145.00	84.00	141.00							605.00	50.42
<b>Total Impressions</b>	532400.00	507655.00	668404.00	462844.00	559725.00							2731028.00	227585.67
<b>NMTV Website Statistics</b>													
Number of Users	6103.00	5860.00	5347.00	4313.00	3534.00							25157.00	2096.42
Number of Views	20923.00	16285.00	14476.00	9558.00	8928.00							70170.00	5847.50
Live Stream Views	1324.00	1692.00	2182.00	599.00	845.00							8642.00	553.50

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**NORTH METRO TV**

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**TO:** OPERATIONS COMMITTEE /CABLE COMMISSION  
**FROM:** HEIDI ARNSON  
**SUBJECT:** 2022 BUDGET OPTIONS  
**DATE:** 5/26/2022

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Preparing a budget for 2022 was a challenge. Estimating income levels was particularly difficult, considering the possible variables. Once decisions are made regarding options, I will make any recommended changes to a final budget.

Some options to consider exist in the personnel, benefits, and capital equipment line-items.

**Personnel**

- COLA
  - Budgeted an up-to 2.75% increase
  - Could eliminate COLA increase
    - Would save \$21,984

**Benefits**

- COLA
  - No COLA increase would save \$3,331
- Benefits Package
  - Included a \$30 per month/per employee increase
  - Benefits package is currently at the 2020 rate
  - Eliminating benefits package increase would save \$3,960

**Capital Investments**

- Closed Captioning
  - Full closed captioning capabilities would require the purchase of three systems at a total cost of \$155,000.
  - Budgeted for 1 system at \$60,000.
    - Could eliminate the introduction of closed captioning for a budget reduction of \$60,000.
- Master Control Channel Servers
  - Current channel server's hardware support contracts expire on May 22, 2022.

- The server could still function, but in the case of failure would result in a channel going off the system for an unknown, possibly extended, period of time.
- Support contracts guarantee replacement of a server within 24 hours
- Wouldn't be able to choose which channel goes down. Servers are assigned to channels.
- We have nine channel servers.
  - Budgeted for two Vio 4 Plus servers that would handle 4 channels each at a total cost of \$65,600
  - Budgeted for 1 VIO Lite server that would handle one channel at a cost of \$9,000
  - We have secured a verbal agreement from Tightrope that would extend the support contract on four of our current servers to January 2023, with the understanding that we would purchase one Vio 4 Plus server in 2022 and another in 2023. This would result in a reduction of \$32,800 from the 2022 capital budget.
  - It would result in a 2023 master control capital budget of approximately \$68,000
    - 1 VIO 4 Plus channel server
    - 7 City Carousel units

#### **Other Variables**

- The amount of reserves utilized
- The amount of fees returned to cities

# 2022 North Metro Telecommunications Commission

## Budget

### Talking Points

#### Overall Organizational Goals

- Continue with organizational assessment and strategy.
- Better define income parameters with information from court decisions and franchise renewal.
- Introduce closed-captioning to the system.
- Grow commercial remote productions streaming service.
- Continue with franchise renewal negotiations.
- Continue to provide staff for meeting coverage.
- Continue to be responsive to cities communications needs.
- Maintain accessibility of all channels through live streaming, OTT channels, and video on demand services, 24-hours-a-day, on any device.
- Provide program playback, video transport, channel management services, video equipment maintenance and consulting services, internet streaming services for city channels, VOD libraries for meetings, meeting management software licenses and bookmarking services, program production and event coverage services, home-media transfer services, and public access to television production for our cities, schools and general public.

#### Estimated Fund Balance/Revenues/Expenses

- The beginning fund balances for 2022 are estimates based on previous allocations, planned spending for 2021, and estimated income.
- Estimated revenues include: Franchise fees, including the actual first quarter franchise fee payment, with anticipated reductions across quarters two through four. PEG fees based on estimated number of subscribers, throughout 2022, multiplied by the PEG fee, or by a percentage in a new franchise document. Other income includes dub fees, home movie transfers, drone, and production services. Interest income is estimated based on the first quarter interest earnings of this year.
- Estimated expenditures include the operating expenses and capital expenses including the bond payment, production and office equipment, and the fee payment to the cities.
- The year end fund balances include:
  - The **Operating reserve** traditionally at 25% of the operating budget. Temporarily includes additional allocations for possible 2022 budgetary support.
  - **Accrued vacation, sick and comp** time. The total value of owed vacation, sick, and comp time to employees.



- The **capital equipment fund** is intended for emergency replacement of unplanned equipment failures. Could also be used for closed captioning equipment.
- The **vehicle replacement fund** is to cover the cost of a new fleet vehicle.
- The **building repair fund** is to cover major costs related to the building such as windows, roof, furnace, parking lot, AC replacement and painting, carpet replacement etc.
- The **franchise renewal fund** is a reserve fund for the NMTC's franchise renewal process. Franchise renewal can be very expensive, with the informal negotiation process historically costing around \$200,000 across the renewal period. Moving to a formal negotiation process is more expensive. These costs include needs assessments, consulting, and legal fees.

### **Budget**

- The recommended operating budget for the organization totals \$1,353,056. This number is a \$14,617 increase over last year's operating budget. If income does not meet expectations, COLA increases will be reexamined.
- Budgeted capital purchases for 2022 are set at \$727,496. Budgeted capital items include channel server replacements, a tripod for the truck, several cameras, microphones, and closed captioning equipment. The capital budget also includes routine computer/software upgrades, and software licenses. The HD Bond payment of \$228,480 and \$225,000 in capital equipment support for cities are also included.
- Some reductions may be made in capital equipment expenditures. If necessary, fewer channel servers could be purchased and introduction of closed captioning could be delayed.

### **Closing Points**

- We have worked together to create a thriving and dynamic service for our cities, schools, producers, and viewers. Through program playback and channel management, internet streaming of city meetings including an agenda bookmarking tool, channel live streaming, Roku and AppleTV channels, video equipment consulting, drone services, and video production services, our cities are seeing real benefits from their investment of franchise fees and PEG fees. Our cable subscribers are benefiting from this investment with educational opportunities, tape and film transfer services, and varied, informative and interesting programming regarding their communities.
- While financial circumstances may dictate modifications, North Metro TV will continue to serve as a vital, responsive, and economical local communication resource.
- 2022 will be a busy year for the Commission. Franchise renewal will move forward, questions regarding funding will be answered, and the new service of

closed captioning will be provided...all under a backdrop of self-examination and responsive change.

**North Metro Telecommunications Commission**  
**2022 FINANCIAL SUMMARY**  
**Estimated Fund Balances/Revenues/Expenditures.**

**BEGINNING FUND BALANCES**

Operating Reserve	\$395,656
Accrued Vac, Sick, Comp	\$120,000
Capital Equip. Fund	\$253,323
Vehicle Replacement Fund	\$45,000
Bldg Repair Reserve	\$200,000
Franchise Renewal Fund	\$200,000
Bond Reserve	\$0

**TOTAL: \$1,213,979**

**ESTIMATED REVENUES**

Franchise Fees	\$1,150,000
PEG Fees	\$700,000
Other Income	\$25,000
Interest Income	\$500
Income From Reserve Funds	\$205,052

**TOTAL: \$2,080,552**

**ESTIMATED EXPENDITURES**

Operating Expenses	\$1,353,056
Capital Expenses: Equipment	\$274,016
Capital Expenses: Bond Payment	\$228,480
Capital Expenses: PEG Fees to Cities	\$225,000

**TOTAL: \$2,080,552**

**YEAR END FUND BALANCES**

		Increase(Decrease)
Operating Reserve	\$338,264	-\$57,392
Accrued Vac, Sick, Comp	\$120,000	\$0
Capital Equip. Fund	\$155,663	-\$97,660
Truck Replacement Fund	\$45,000	\$0
Bldg Repair Reserve	\$200,000	\$0
Franchise Renewal Fund	\$150,000	-\$50,000
Bond Reserve	\$0	\$0

**TOTAL: \$1,008,927      -\$205,052**

# **North Metro Telecommunications Commission**

## **Budget Line Item Supporting Information**

### **Personnel**

- As with last year, there is some uncertainty regarding income. The personnel line-item is our largest, and, usually, the only budget area that experiences any fluctuation from year to year. Last year I had planned to include no COLA increase because of income concerns. At that time, it was recommended that an up-to COLA increase be put in the budget as a separate line-item that could be revisited based on income. I have followed that same protocol this year. Based on information provided by the Operations Committee, I have budgeted an up-to 2.75% COLA increase as a separate line-item. The personnel total could increase by \$21,984. The possible increase would cover a step increase for one employee, and an up-to 2.75% COLA increase. Final salary determinations can be made when a clearer understanding of income for 2022 is known.
- Part-time staff is divided into two groups; freelancers and 20 hour-per-week staff. Employees in the freelancer group are contracted when needed for a sports shoot or to cover a city meeting and generally do not work enough to qualify for PERA. The second part-time designation is for two 20 hours per week positions that do qualify for PERA. Neither category is eligible for health benefits. Payroll taxes apply.

### **Benefits**

- The NMTC employee benefits package budget is based on the values of the benefits packages offered by the Member Cities to their employees. It is budgeted at \$1,225.00 per person/per month. This is \$30 more than was budgeted for 2020 and for 2021. This amount is less than the average of Member City package values for 2022 (average = \$1,285). The benefits package was not increased last year, so currently remains at the 2020 level.
- All indications are that the NMTC's contribution to PERA will remain at 7.5% in 2022.
- If no COLA increases are given the benefits line-item would decrease by \$3,331.

### **Administrative Expenses**

- Budgeted administrative expenses are \$20,000 less than 2021. The difference is that \$20,000 was budgeted for a consultant in 2021 to analyze the needs of the organization going forward. That amount was removed from the 2022 budget. It is anticipated that there will be no need to conduct a technical audit or additional franchise or PEG fee audits of Comcast in 2022.

### **Production Expenses**

- Budgeted production expenses are \$1,000 more than 2021. The DVD/Flash Drive/Cases line-item was increased to reflect actual 2020 costs.
- All other production expenses remain near the 2021 level.

## **Office Expenses**

- Office expenses are budgeted \$1,900 more than the 2021 level.
- The building maintenance line-item remains at \$30,000. Building maintenance includes the furnace/AC maintenance contract, lawn care, snow removal, carpet and window cleaning, fire inspection, and landscaping and building mechanical services. While expenses have been high in 2020 and so far in 2021, it includes some COVID related costs.
- The building utilities line item remains at \$30,000. Building utilities include sewer, water, gas, and electric.
- Insurance includes all property, liability, crime, volunteer, vehicle, and monument sign coverage.
- Office supply line-item includes all office supplies, and maintenance contracts on printers and copiers. It was reduced by \$3,500.
- The Telephone/Internet/Web Hosting line-item was increased by \$5,000 over the 2021 budget. The increase will cover probable cost increases for bandwidth. Bandwidth is required to transport signals from city hall. NMTV continues to pay a fee to house video-on-demand and streaming content on a remote server. This allows for unlimited simultaneous viewing, without a reduction in speed, or an inordinate amount of bandwidth for that purpose. The line-item also covers the wireless live transmission of sporting events and other field productions. The website maintenance contract, web hosting, telephone costs, license fees for our Roku and AppleTV apps, and the annual phone software upgrade are also included.
- Postage covers the cost of mailing dubs and equipment for contract maintenance, and other postage for the NMTC.
- Property tax is for the recycling assessment. It went up by \$1,000 in 2021, so the line-item was increased to reflect that charge.
- Building cleaning, trash, recycling, and hazardous material disposal/recycling.

## **Capital Expenditures**

- The 2022 capital budget currently includes \$186,016 for production equipment, \$60,000 for the introduction of closed captioning, \$28,000 for office systems, \$228,480 for the HD bond payment, and \$225,000 for city capital expenses. The only capital item set in stone for the 2022 budget is the HD bond payment. The majority of the equipment budget is dedicated to master control server upgrades. The current 9 channel servers will outlive their hardware support lives as of May 22, 2022. Having hardware support means that if a channel server goes down we will have a replacement server within 24 hours. Without the contract we would have to wait until the failing server is repaired or until we could replace the server with a new one. That means a channel would be down for that period of time. We can't pick which channel is down. It would be whichever channel is housed on that server. Money was also budgeted to introduce one closed captioning unit to the system. Other capital items for 2022 have been kept to a bare minimum and include a tripod system for the production truck, microphone replacements, two camcorders and the annual maintenance/support/insurance contracts for city and NMTV Tightrope, Ross, Haivision and Carousel equipment.
- Office equipment includes routine computer and software upgrades, and software licenses for office and editing computers

- Fees back to Cities are included as a capital cost. Once the franchise is renewed with Comcast PEG fees could be restricted to capital costs. In such a case, any PEG fees used for operating costs would result in lower franchise fees. As such, PEG fees will be returned to cities for equipment upgrades and reserves.

## **Summary**

- Depending on COLA and benefits decisions, operating expenses could be \$10,329 less than in 2021, or up to \$14,617 more than was budgeted in 2021.
- Capital equipment expenditures are budgeted at \$186,016. It is possible to reduce this expenditure to \$153,216. The majority of the equipment expenditures are for master control servers.
- Delaying the introduction of closed captioning would decrease the capital budget by \$60,000
- It is recommended that fees returned to cities be included in capital expenditures in order to maximize fee payments in the future. This budget includes \$225,000 in fees for city capital expenditures and capital reserves.

<p align="center"><b>2022</b>  <b>North Metro Telecommunications Commission Budget</b></p>	
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# 2022 North Metro Telecommunications Commission Budget

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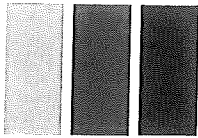


**2022**  
**North Metro Telecommunications Commission Budget**

	2020 ACTUAL	2021		2022	NOTES
		Budget	April Act.		
<b>CAPITAL EXPENDITURES</b>					
Video Equipment	117,873	100,000	73,280	186,016	MC Channel servers; cameras; tripods; mics
Closed Captioning 1 live Stream				60,000	Set-up for 1 live stream & post captioning
Computer/Office Equipment/Sftwre	21,563	28,000	3,914	28,000	office systems, software
Vehicles	0		0		
Building Expenditures	0		0		
Bond Payment	231,630	227,430	227,430	228,480	
City Capital Expenditures				225,000	HD Upgrade
<b>CAPITAL EXP. TOTAL:</b>	<b>371,066</b>	<b>355,430</b>	<b>304,624</b>	<b>727,496</b>	Equipment/Equipment Reserves
<b>GRAND TOTAL:</b>	<b>1,495,198</b>	<b>1,693,869</b>	<b>741,080</b>	<b>2,080,552</b>	

## NORTH METRO FRANCHISE FEE HISTORY

[illegible]



Bradley

MEMORANDUM

**To:** North Metro Telecommunications Commission  
**From:** Mike Bradley and Michael Athay  
**Re:** June 2021 Legal Report  
**Date:** June 2, 2021

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**Sixth Circuit Opinion and Judgment Issued in Cable Franchising Appeal**

A large coalition of local governments sought judicial review by the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals of the FCC's 2019 *Third Report and Order* (the "Order") on cable franchising. The Order ruled that nearly all noncash franchise consideration were franchise fees valued at fair market value and that franchising authorities were preempted from regulating all non-cable services of a franchised cable operator. The Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals issued its opinion in *City of Eugene v. FCC* (6<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2021) on May 26, 2021. The Court in *City of Eugene* held that cable-related noncash exactions that are not mandated by the federal Cable Act are franchise fees, but they are to be valued at the cable operator's marginal cost. Additionally, the Court ruled that franchising authorities may regulate non-cable services so long as the regulation is not inconsistent with the federal Cable Act, but also held that charging a license fee on internet services provided by a franchised cable operator is preempted. The following is a summary of the decision.

Cable-Related Noncash "In-Kind" Exactions Not Mandated by the Cable Act Are Franchise Fees Subject to the 5% Franchise Fee Cap

You will recall that the FCC had concluded that nearly all cable-related noncash (or "in-kind") exactions are franchise fees subject to the franchise fee cap. The municipal coalition argued that non-monetary franchise provisions are not exactions and could not be considered a "tax, fee or assessment" (as required by the Cable Act) and therefore not a franchise fee. The Court generally upheld the FCC on this issue. It distinguished between noncash obligations mandated by the Cable Act and negotiated provisions, which the Court referred to as exactions. Noncash obligations mandated by the Cable Act, such as build-out requirements, anti-redlining requirements, customer service requirements – along with PEG capital costs, are not franchise fees. On the other hand, noncash cable-related exactions the Court said are not mandated by the Cable Act, such as channel capacity designated for PEG, institutional networks (or "I-Nets") and free cable service to public buildings are franchise fees subject to the five-percent franchise fee cap.

Noncash Cable-Related Exactions Should be Assigned a Value Equal to the Cable Operator's Marginal Cost in Providing Them

While the Court ruled in favor of the FCC's determination that noncash exactions are franchise fees, it rejected and overturned the FCC's determination that the value of the noncash

Bradley Law, LLC

exactions should be the fair market value of the noncash exactions. The Court ruled that the FCC had “its payors mixed up” and that “[n]ot a word in § 542 supports the notion that franchise fees can be a source of profit for cable operators.” The Court held “that, for purposes of § 542(b), noncash cable-related exactions should be assigned a value equal to the cable operator’s marginal cost in providing them. Obviously, this significantly reduces the economic impact of including noncash cable-related exactions as franchise fees.

#### Statutory Franchise Fee Cap may be Different from Franchise Fee in Cable Franchise

As a reminder, franchising authorities should consider that there should be no franchise fee off set for noncash cable-related exactions unless and until the value of the non-monetary franchise provisions exceed the Cable Act’s cap of 5% of the cable operator's gross revenues. Even if a franchising authority is receiving a franchise fee per a cable franchise, if there are exclusions in the definition of gross revenues in the cable franchise it may actually be less than the Cable Act's statutory franchise fee cap. This point was not in the Sixth Circuit’s decision.

#### State and Local Government May Regulate Non-Cable Services So Long As It Is Not Inconsistent with the Cable Act

The FCC attempted to preempt any regulation of non-cable services provided over a cable system. This has been referred to as the “mixed use” rule, referring to the mixed services provided over a cable system network. The local government coalition argued that preemption was not supported by the language of the Cable Act. The Court indicated that to “a significant extent we agree with [the local government coalition].” The Court confirmed that the Cable Act circumscribes rather than grants franchise authority over cable operators. For purposes of preemption, the Court developed the following test: Whether state or local action is “inconsistent with” a specific provision of the Cable Act. A state or local government may not end-run the Cable Act’s limitations by using other governmental entities or other sources of authority to accomplish indirectly what franchising authorities are prohibited from doing directly.

Using this test, the Court found that a franchising authority is prohibited by the Cable Act from requiring a fee for the provision of internet services (classified as an information service) as a condition for a cable franchise. Next, the Court found that a franchise granted to a cable operator (that is not a common carrier) provides the authority to the cable operator to operate its cable system including the right to use the cable system to provide information services. A subsequent attempt by a franchising authority to impose a license fee for the provision of internet service over a franchised cable system is “merely the exercise of its franchise power by another name... Thus, the fee is not ‘consistent with’ [the Cable Act] and is therefore preempted.”

#### **Treasury Publishes Interim Final Rules for American Rescue Plan Act Funding**

The U.S. Treasury Department’s Interim Final Rules governing applications for American Rescue Plan Act Funding were published in the Federal Register on May 17, making the Rules effective as of that date. Treasury is accepting comments on the Rules (which can be found at <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/05/17/2021-10283/coronavirus-state-and-local->

fiscal-recovery-funds) until July 16, 2021. Instructions on filing comments are available at the foregoing link. By way of brief summary, potential uses of the funding include the following:

- Broadband infrastructure

Funding is available for broadband infrastructure that is designed to provide service to unserved or underserved households and businesses and that is designed to, upon completion: (A) Reliably meet or exceed symmetrical 100 Mbps download speed and upload speeds; or (B) In cases where it is not practicable, because of the excessive cost of the project or geography or topography of the area to be served by the project, to provide service meeting the standards set forth in paragraph (e)(2)(A) of this section: (i) Reliably meet or exceed 100 Mbps download speed and between at least 20 Mbps and 100 Mbps upload speed; and (ii) Be scalable to a minimum of 100 Mbps download speed and 100 Mbps upload speed. *Unserved and underserved households or businesses* means one or more households or businesses that are not currently served by a *wireline* connection [emphasis added] that reliably delivers at least 25 Mbps download speed and 3 Mbps of upload speed. Municipal broadband projects are encouraged: "Treasury also encourages recipients to prioritize support for broadband networks owned, operated by, or affiliated with local governments, non-profits, and co-operatives- providers with less pressure to turn profits and with a commitment to serving entire communities."

- Broadband Services and Digital Literacy

Section 603(c)(1)(A) of the Act permits use of Fiscal Recovery Funds to respond to the negative economic impacts of the COVID-19 public health emergency, which. can include assisting with broadband services and digital literacy: "Assistance to households or populations facing negative economic impacts due to COVID-19 is also an eligible use [including] internet access or digital literacy assistance," among many other authorized uses. In assessing whether a household or population experienced economic harm as a result of the pandemic, a recipient may presume that a household or population that experienced unemployment or increased food or housing insecurity or is low- or moderate-income experienced negative economic impacts resulting from the pandemic." In addition to new programs, State, local, and Tribal governments may use the funds to improve efficacy of programs addressing negative economic impacts, including through use of data analysis, targeted consumer outreach, improvements to data or technology infrastructure, and impact evaluations.

- PEG, Public and Other Government Services:

The Act and rules allow funds to be used "[f]or the provision of government services to the extent of a reduction in the recipient's general revenue" due to the COVID-19 public health emergency. (The guidance includes details about how to calculate the revenue reduction, together with use limitations.) Recipients [have] broad latitude to use the funds for the provision of government services, with many examples included, among them: modernization of cybersecurity, including hardware, software, and protection of critical

infrastructure, the provision of police, fire, and other public safety services, and where the local government provides PEG services, presumably it would be permissible to use the funds for those services as well, though PEG is not expressly listed. PEG may also be a permissible use of funds to provide resources to meet and address emergent public health needs, which includes public communication efforts relating to the pandemic such as many PEG entities have been working on throughout the COVID-19 emergency. Funds may be transferred to a private nonprofit organization or to other government units or to private entities, which may allow funding to be directed to a nonprofit PEG access center or nonprofits working on digital inclusion or affordable broadband programs.

### **FCC Launches Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) Program**

The FCC has announced the launch of the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program (EBB Program), which is the \$3.2 billion fund established by Congress in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, to provide subsidies toward the cost of high-speed internet services and devices for eligible households during the COVID-19 pandemic. Providers participating in the EBB Program can begin enrolling eligible households into the program, and households will be able to check their eligibility directly using the National Lifeline Eligibility Verifier consumer portal, starting on May 12, 2021. For more information: <https://www.fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit>. Outreach materials are available at <https://www.fcc.gov/emergency-broadband-benefit-outreach-toolkit>.

### **Comcast Announces EBB Subsidies Up to \$50/month**

In early May, Comcast announced that it is participating in the Federal Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) program that provides qualifying low-income consumers with a subsidy to help cover the cost of their Internet service and leased Internet equipment. According to Comcast, the temporary benefit provides subsidies of up to \$50/month for Comcast's Xfinity Internet service, including Internet Essentials, and is available to both new and existing customers. For more information: [www.xfinity.com/EBB](http://www.xfinity.com/EBB).

### **Amazon Purchases MGM Studios**

Amazon agreed last week to acquire MGM for \$8.45 billion, giving it access to a huge content library, including thousands of films and TV shows, among them the James Bond and Rocky movies and TV shows *Fargo* and *Handmaid's Tale*. For more information: [Next TV/Broadcasting+Cable](#).

### **Changes to the Minnesota Open Meeting Law**

Recently enacted changes to Minnesota's Open Meeting Law will help cities transition from the fully remote meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic to in-person meetings. Among other things, the new law removes the cap from the medical exception, which means council members and others subject to the law will be able to attend in-person meetings remotely more than three times for medical reasons during the COVID-19 pandemic. The changes, signed into law by

Gov. Tim Walz on May 6, also include technological updates and other changes. A detailed summary is available from the League of Minnesota Cities at: <https://www.lmc.org/news-publications/news/all/fonl-pandemic-fix-oml/>. Specific guidance from the League on holding in-person council meetings is available at: <https://www.lmc.org/news-publications/news/all/in-person-council-meetings-oml/>.

### **Border-to-Border Broadband Grant Program To Receive \$70 million Under Budget Agreement**

Minnesota's Border-to-Border Broadband Grant Program will receive \$70 million over the next two years as part of a \$52 billion, two-year budget agreement announced May 17 by Governor Tim Walz, Senate Majority Paul Gazelka, and Speaker of the House Melissa Hortman, on the final day of the 2021 legislative session. Funding sources are open. The budget agreement is to be turned into law at a Special Session of the legislature set for mid-June.

# Study Shocker: Connected TV Use Has Narrowly Declined This Year

By Daniel Frankel 5 days ago

Leichtman Research Group says 39% of U.S. TV households watch video on TV using a connected TV device daily vs. 40% in 2020

This is not the way all these pointy headed OTT studies we've published ad nauseam over the last decade-plus are supposed to work!

A new Leichtman Research Group (LRG) study said the percentage of U.S. TV households connecting their TV to the internet to watch video has *gone down* this year, narrowly at least, to 39% from 40% in the pandemic 2020.

"Use of connected TV devices leveled off over the past year after being pulled forward due to the coronavirus pandemic last year," said Bruce Leichtman, principal analyst for LRG.

Indeed, 2020's level was a significant bump from the 31% of homes in 2019 found by LRG to watch video via a connected TV gadget, the 19% reported in 2016 and the 3% reported in 2011.

Other data in LRG's *Connected TVs 2021* report seem to maintain the status quo in terms of the industry's upward trajectory.

The report said that 82% of U.S. TV homes have at least one internet-connected TV device, such as a Roku box or streaming-enabled gaming console, vs. 80% in 2020, 74% in 2019, 65% in 2016 and 30% in 2011.

LRG also said that 60% of adults watch video via a connected TV device at least weekly, compared to 59% in 2020, 52% in 2019, 40% in 2016, and 10% in 2011.



# How the pandemic changed America's ideas about infrastructure

We're not just talking about planes, trains and automobiles anymore.

By ERICK TRICKEY

05/27/2021 04:30 AM EDT

Erick Trickey is a freelance writer based in Boston. He teaches magazine journalism at Boston University.

Almost exactly a year ago, homebound, stir-crazy Bostonians learned they'd soon get a break from Covid-era isolation. Two months into a state stay-at-home advisory, Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker announced that restaurants would be allowed to seat diners again — outdoors.

There was just one problem: In the city's densely packed neighborhoods and inner-ring suburbs, with people living on top of each other and jostling for every square inch, where could restaurants find outdoor spaces for socially distanced dining?

In Cambridge, across the Charles River from Boston, city traffic officials had an idea. Days after Baker's announcement, they met with restaurant owners in Inman Square, a tight neighborhood with sidewalks too narrow for tables. They proposed something they'd studied before the pandemic, but never dared to do: Take over two lanes of Cambridge Street, turning parking spaces and a travel lane into space for alfresco dining on asphalt.

Just weeks later, on July 1, socially distanced patio tables belonging to four restaurants — a Mexican cantina, a fried chicken and barbecue spot, a coffeehouse, and an Irish pub — were filled with diners. A concrete barrier and orange barrels set them off from traffic. Other neighborhood restaurants made patios in curbside parking spaces and a city parking lot. Inman Square became one of Cambridge's few spots of nightlife last summer and fall, attracting a steady stream of well-distanced diners who at last had somewhere to go.

When the country shut down, transit ridership plummeted. Now, as things go back to normal, transit officials have an opportunity to reshape their systems to be more efficient and equitable.

The Covid-19 pandemic has scrambled our lives, our economy, and what we expect from government. Across the country, what we want and need from infrastructure — the transportation and communication networks that keep us moving, talking and working — has changed, and is unlikely to revert to the pre-pandemic status quo.

And in this new way of looking at public systems and spaces, it turns out that lots of things we didn't previously consider infrastructure, like street space for outdoor dining, have now become critical to the functioning of the economy.

“For a lot of these businesses, this could be the difference between surviving and not surviving,” said Joe Barr, Cambridge’s director of traffic, parking and transportation.

A restaurant worker cleans the sidewalk alongside new outdoor seating in the streets of Boston, Mass., in June 2020. | Craig F. Walker/The Boston Globe via Getty Images

That’s no hypothetical — almost one in four Massachusetts restaurants has closed during the pandemic. Before Covid, “their biggest concern [was] ensuring that there’s still parking on the street,” Barr said. “But I think they realized that in this moment, the parking was less important than just having a place to safely or comfortably serve food.”

We’re used to thinking about the physical systems that undergird our economy primarily in terms of roads and bridges — the proverbial planes, trains and automobiles that move people and goods. But the pandemic showed that most of those things could halt and large sectors of the economy could keep going thanks to other systems that are increasingly critical to our well-being.

During the pandemic, high-speed internet became one of our most economically important infrastructure systems. So did package delivery, which became a lifeline when stores became potential vectors of Covid transmission. The U.S. Postal Service’s role not just in commerce, but in the fabric of our democracy, also became clear: it gave many of us a new, safe way to vote. And as the pandemic eases, transportation systems face a reckoning, as remote work is likely to persist for some workers some of the time and business travel may forever be reduced by the accelerated use of video conferencing.

Many of these changes will be long-lasting, which prompts a new concern: What do we need to do to pandemic-proof, and future-proof, our critical infrastructure systems going forward?

These questions are rising at the same time Washington debates President Joe Biden’s \$2 trillion jobs and infrastructure plan and congressional Republicans’ \$568 billion alternative. But D.C. thinking about infrastructure can get narrow fast. Debating dictionary definitions — does only transportation count as infrastructure, or is it anything that keeps the economy going? — misses how the pandemic has already inalterably changed the country and our way of life.

Here are four ways the Covid-19 pandemic has changed how Americans use and value the networks that bind us together and keep the economy going — changes that pose important political and policy challenges as we move into the post-pandemic world.

## **Streets**

### **No longer just for cars.**

For decades, cities have designed and built streets mostly for vehicles. But during the pandemic, cities across the country remade their main streets to adjust to the new ways people were using them.

Car traffic and auto sales both dropped in 2020, and transit ridership fell by more than half. But U.S. bicycle sales have surged — from 15 million in 2019 to 20 million in 2020, according to the NPD Group, which tracks retail trends — as city dwellers embrace open-air alternatives to cars and transit. People have also been walking more, for exercise, for grocery shopping, and to see friends outdoors. Cities and states have responded by accelerating work on bike lanes and creating pedestrian-friendly intersections.

“Cities and towns control that street space,” said Chris Dempsey, director of the nonprofit coalition Transportation for Massachusetts. “Every single day, they are making a decision to allocate that space to one set of users or one type of transportation or another. For 100 years, most cities and towns have said they’re going to allocate that space to people who want to park their vehicles. The pandemic has spurred them to think differently, and they’re seeing the benefits.”

When Covid-19 hit, Boston sped up a planned expansion of its separated bike lane network, installing 6.5 miles of new lanes in 2020 — a four-fold increase over 2019. City workers marked off miles of temporary bike lanes with orange cones and barrels in mid-July. By fall, the orange barrels came down and permanent bike lanes went in, ringing all of the Public Garden and three sides of Boston Common, one of the nation’s oldest public spaces.

“Things moved quicker during the pandemic than they normally would have,” said Vineet Gupta, chief planner for Boston’s transportation department. Last summer’s temporary lanes offered essential workers a safer commute; medical workers received free two-month bikeshare passes, and the bike station at Massachusetts General Hospital, six blocks north of Boston Common, became the system’s most popular. The new lanes also forge a long-awaited link between downtown and the city’s extensive bike network to the south and west.

“We wanted to respond in a way that set us up for recovery,” Gupta said.

A man rides a bicycle in a parking lane that has been closed to cars to reduce crowding on the adjacent sidewalk and allow social distancing in Boston, Mass., in April 2020. | Michael Dwyer/AP Photo

Boston allowed 200 restaurants to construct patios in parking spots, cutting red tape during the Covid emergency. In 2018, the city had released guidelines for how restaurants could take over street parking, but no one applied. Now, Gupta said, the city may make in-street dining a permanent part of Boston summers. “We realize this is a popular program, loved by our residents,” he said.

A similar rethinking of street space is occurring around the country. In Portland, Ore., a business association in a historically Black neighborhood launched the Dream Street Plaza, offering space to 15 vendors and several Black artists on a closed street for most of October. In Durham, N.C.,

advocates aimed to set up recreational activities on five closed streets — but when residents said they were more interested in slower traffic speeds, the advocates redesigned the program to include curb cuts and traffic circles.

“Throughout the pandemic, we’ve had to think a little bit differently about space, as we’ve had to think about physical distancing,” said Corinne Kisner, executive director of the National Association of City Transportation Officials, which helped fund the Portland and Durham programs. “We’re seeing a lot of really creative thinking in communities.”

Many urban planners learned last year that public feedback is important, even in a crisis, when some changes got pushback. Oakland, Calif., made international headlines with its plan to close more than 20 miles of streets to through traffic, but its “slow streets” program didn’t go over well in some poorer Black neighborhoods, where many residents said they had no say in the closings and that the program hadn’t made streets safer. In response, the city shifted the program to include traffic-calming near grocery stores and Covid-testing sites. “We’re seeing interesting work in cities like Oakland to really engage with the community, and say, ‘Is this meeting your needs? How can we adjust the program?’” Kisner says.

Kisner thinks many new approaches to streets will last beyond the pandemic — and she says they all need to. Covid-19 isn’t the only crisis the U.S. faces, she said: “Climate change, systemic racism, injustice, economic inequality: those are the preexisting conditions and the other crises that have been long-simmering.” Changing how we use our streets can help combat climate change, increase access to jobs, and cut down on police interactions associated with driving.

“We can’t afford to stick with the status quo,” she said. “That really wasn’t working before.”

## **Broadband**

### **What comes down must also go up.**

The pandemic has proven that high-speed internet service isn’t just nice to have, it’s a need-to-have for participating in today’s economy. After more than a year on Zoom, millions of Americans have come to depend on high-speed internet for their daily needs and responsibilities, including work, school and telemedicine.

“We go into this pandemic, and suddenly, kids are learning at the kitchen counter, somebody’s on their VPN on the couch right next to them, and somebody else is streaming in the basement,” said Shirley Bloomfield, CEO of NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association.

But high-speed internet is still unavailable in large swaths of rural America. Covid-19 has strengthened the case for making broadband access a major government project, a 2020s version of rural electrification in the 1930s. Closing the so-called digital divide could become an economic engine in some communities, as businesses looking for expansion locations and urban dwellers freed by remote work factor good broadband into their moves.

“It became very, very clear that as the society and economy continued to digitize, if you’re on the on the wrong side, you’re going to have a very bad time,” said Roberto Gallardo, director of the Purdue Center for Regional Development, who has worked with rural communities on digital issues for a decade.

The pandemic has also brought a new focus on what kind of broadband technology to install where. Many providers started out as cable TV companies and often have focused on download speeds as their primary metric, figuring users were most interested in streaming entertainment or games.

“Before Covid, providers were advertising download speeds only,” Gallardo said. “During Covid, it became very clear that upload speeds are very important, as well.”

That’s because we’re now coming to the internet as participants, not just entertainment consumers — Zoom, for instance, requires the same amount of upload as download. That puts certain internet technologies at a disadvantage, while strengthening the case for symmetrical fiber broadband, which is capable of equally fast upload and download.

The Federal Communications Commission says about 30 million Americans lack access to high-speed internet, including more than one-third of people in rural and tribal areas. Critics say that’s almost certainly an undercount, since the FCC relies on self-reported figures from telecom companies and counts a census tract as having broadband if only one household has it. (Congress approved \$65 million for better FCC broadband maps in December.)

Rural areas, Gallardo says, tend to have either older, slower copper-based DSL technology or fixed-wireless service beamed to homes via radio waves. Many big providers have said they won’t maintain their DSL networks in the long run, and fixed wireless has limitations.

“Physics-wise, there’s only so much data you can pack into that radio wave,” Gallardo said. “If you have a couple of houses here and there, with a line of sight, fixed wireless is phenomenal. It can accomplish decent speeds.” But once more users crowd onto fixed wireless, speed drops. And any area without line of sight to a cell tower, or with trees in the way, is out of luck.

Bloomfield, who represents more than 800 small telecommunications companies, says her members typically use fixed wireless to serve customers at the very ends of their networks until they can afford to extend their fiber networks that far. Long-term, Bloomfield thinks the federal government’s broadband strategy should focus on fiber: “If the government really says, [let’s make a] huge commitment, go big on infrastructure, I think the idea of playing small ball on broadband is so shortsighted, and not the best investment.”

In December, the FCC auctioned off \$9.2 billion in rural broadband expansion grants. The auction may preview how the federal government could spend bigger future investments, such as the \$100 billion for broadband in Biden’s jobs and infrastructure plan or the \$65 billion in congressional Republicans’ proposal.

A look at the map of who won the auctions reveals interesting patterns. Fixed-wireless providers such as LTD Broadband and cable providers such as Charter Communications won major grants.

But click on some of the map's biggest blocks — remote stretches of states like Utah, Oregon, Colorado and Maine — and the winner is Space Exploration Technologies Corp.: SpaceX for short. Elon Musk's company is now launching 300 satellites a month into low-Earth orbit to create Starlink, a relay network ringing the globe. Each satellite beams internet access down to the planet when the satellite's orbit passes over Starlink's coverage area. The network offers faster signal speeds than satellites in geosynchronous orbits, 22,000 miles up.

Skeptics think satellite broadband will face challenges delivering high speeds, not to mention reliability problems due to weather and geography. "I see it potentially having a niche role to play, in certain parts of the country that are so remote you actually can't bring infrastructure in," Bloomfield said. "I think it's unproven to date."

## **Air Travel**

### **Fewer business trips spell trouble.**

Waves of cause-and-effect from the pandemic will change how Americans fly, even as the virus' threat recedes. "We don't expect business travel to ever return to where it was before the pandemic," said John Mok, an aviation consultant and former director of the Cleveland and Cincinnati airports. "And it was the business travel that was the profit margin." Some business executives may still fly occasionally, Mok adds, but many of their clients may have grown comfortable relying more on video conferencing platforms like Zoom.

Ned Hill, an economist at Ohio State University who's participated in 11 conversations with manufacturing leaders about pandemic challenges, says that going forward, executives are likely to change where and why they travel. "It's making closing sales more difficult," said Hill, "but they've realized they don't have to show as much at consumer shows."

Post-Covid, airlines will have to depend more on leisure travelers, many of whom are price-conscious. That probably means more nonstops to tourist destinations, and fewer nonstops to business destinations —which Hill thinks will push more regional business travelers to drive: "Every time you change [planes], that's an extra two hours to your trip."

What does that mean for government? In the U.S., all airports are government-run, owned by cities, counties or regional authorities. Airline mergers and redrawn route patterns might leave some airports behind. "We had already seen, before the pandemic, network carriers pulling down or eliminating service to smaller cities," said Mok. He expects Covid's aftereffects to accelerate the trend. In a worst-case scenario, Mok thinks, Congress might have to choose whether to increase Essential Air Service subsidies for the smallest rural airports — or let some close. "Is it the role of the federal government to subsidize those markets?" Mok asks.

Many terminal expansions at cramped airports are on hold during the pandemic, waiting for crowds and the funding they bring to return. When they do, travelers are more likely to be passing through aging, outdated airports.

The average U.S. airport is about 40 years old. “When we designed these airports, there was no 9/11,” said Kevin Burke, president and CEO of Airports Council International - North America. “None of these tragedies of the last 20 years were even thought of.” Burke’s airport group recently estimated that U.S. airports have a \$115 billion backlog of infrastructure projects, such as bigger terminals to accommodate larger aircraft, more spacing between gates, and more room for security checkpoints. But to fund expansions, airports rely on landing fees and a passenger facility charge per ticket. “Few airports are able to do big infrastructure right now,” Burke said. (Biden’s infrastructure plan includes \$25 billion for airports, including terminal expansions and transit connections to airports; the Republican proposal offers \$44 billion.)

Airports would like Congress to increase passenger fees beyond the current \$4.50 per flight. But airlines and consumer groups argue that the airports should find more money in revenue streams such as rental cars, parking, on-site hotels, restaurants and shopping. Of course, those revenue sources could also be hurt by a decline in expense-account business travel.

Seth Lehman, an analyst for Fitch Ratings, said airports that spent heavily on future growth and fall short of expectations may be at more financial risk than others. So might smaller regional airports, if airlines turn instead to big-city airports nearby. In July, Fitch downgraded its rating of the busy Terminal 4 at New York’s JFK Airport, where 30 to 40 international airlines flew in and out before the pandemic. Its total flights are still down 60 to 70 percent, said Lehman; the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey scaled back the terminal’s expansion plans this April. For major international airports like JFK, “it’s very difficult to know when recovery will happen, because some [international] governments are still in a difficult situation with their vaccination rollouts, Covid cases and lockdowns.”

## **U.S. Postal Service**

### **An old service gains new power.**

If you don’t think of the U.S. Postal Service as infrastructure, think again. It’s the only nation-building tool written into the Constitution, which gave Congress the power to “establish Post Offices and post Roads.” Its 500,000 career workers staff 31,000 post offices nationwide and a fleet of 230,000 vehicles.

Americans relied on the Postal Service during the pandemic, to vote by mail and to receive packages instead of shopping in stores. What’s more, the Postal Service is America’s most popular government agency, according to Pew Research Center polling, with favorable ratings of 90 percent in November 2019 and 91 percent in the pandemic’s first weeks.

Despite the service’s popularity, the pandemic has heightened concerns about it. Those anxieties peaked before the presidential election, after Louis DeJoy, a major donor to former President Donald Trump, became postmaster general. DeJoy carried out budget and service cuts that critics

feared would delay election mail. That led to lawsuits, scrutiny from federal courts, and a rollback of some cuts as Election Day neared. Under pressure, the Postal Service came through: it reported in mid-November that the average mail-in ballot was delivered to election offices in 1.6 days and that 99.89 percent arrived within seven days.

“The Post Office was at its best in terms of mail ballots,” said Mark Dimondstein, president of the American Postal Workers Union. “They made up their mind that mail ballots were going to be given priority. The management, the unions and the workers all worked together to make sure it got done.”

Yet the Postal Service’s performance has suffered since December 2020, when a flood of holiday packages and a wave of postal employees sick with Covid-19 contributed to a massive mail bottleneck. Checks, court notices and credit card payments arrived late. Only 78 percent of first-class mail arrived on time in the first three months of 2021, compared to 92 percent a year earlier.

“The fixation on packages, seen as a growing if not booming business in the future, has undercut the focus on mail delivery,” said Paul Steidler, who analyzes the Postal Service for the Lexington Institute, a conservative think tank. The post office, Steidler notes, still delivers 16 times as much mail as packages and makes more profit from mail. But the amount of mail drops every year, as more Americans go paperless.

That pressures the Postal Service to either shrink or evolve. Congress requires the Postal Service to deliver mail to every address in the U.S. while being self-sustaining — that is, pay for itself with stamp sales, parcel charges, and so forth. In 2006, Congress also saddled the Postal Service with a costly obligation to prepay retired employee health benefits, a requirement applied to no other federal agency. The Postal Service has lost money every year since.

In March, DeJoy released a 10-year plan to reform the Postal Service, to head off projected losses of \$160 billion over the next decade. It calls on Congress to abolish the prepay requirement — and there’s growing support on Capitol Hill to do just that. DeJoy’s plan would also raise stamp prices, cut post office hours, and close some post offices in cities. It would bolster the Postal Service’s growing package delivery business but cut its standards for prompt delivery of regular mail: cross-country mail would take up to five days, compared to a three-day goal now.

“I have heard the plan doesn’t go far enough, that we should be shuttering more post offices, shifting to five-day delivery, or slashing our workforce,” DeJoy said this month at a meeting of the Postal Service’s board of governors. “I have also heard the plan goes too far, that we must adhere to standards we cannot meet and services we can’t afford. ... What I don’t hear is any viable, comprehensive alternative.”

Not so fast, others say. “The thing I most dislike,” Steidler said about the reform plan, “is the absence of financial information about why the first-class mail standard needs to be degraded.” Steidler thinks the Postal Service should stick to its standards for prompt delivery, even if it has



to hike stamp prices substantially to do it — and it should be willing to downsize as mail volume declines.

Thinking of the Postal Service as infrastructure could lead to new roles for the agency.

Dimondstein, the union president, thinks the Postal Service could raise revenue by offering new financial services, such as paycheck cashing, bill paying and electronic money transfers, as post offices in Europe and other countries do. It could also lease space to states for services such as hunting and fishing licenses.

Biden's infrastructure plan calls for replacing the entire fleet of postal delivery vehicles, which currently average 28 years old and get only 10 miles per gallon, with electric vehicles. Dimondstein sees another opportunity. Post offices, he says, could operate electric vehicle charging stations for postal trucks and the public.

"If someone is traveling from one end of the country to another, or getting in the car and going 600 to 800 miles, you could stop at the local post office, plug in, and pay a small fee," Dimondstein said. "And the Post Office is everywhere."

### **Time for an update**

Infrastructure is everywhere too, and outside Washington, the pandemic has altered the way Americans think about it. In some cases, Covid has accelerated trends in how we connect that were already underway; in others, it's sparked entirely new ways of thinking about our social and economic needs.

Many of those changes may well last for years or decades ahead. So the question for American politics and government isn't just whether the White House and Capitol Hill can finally agree on a new infrastructure package. It's also not the difference between \$2 trillion and \$568 billion in spending or how to pay for it.

It's whether Congress and the administration can get their minds around the ways the country has *already* changed — and, whether on the streets, online, in the air, or even on our mail trucks — they've updated their thinking and adjusted their strategy to fit a post-pandemic America.