

CEO'S MESSAGE



Seth Arndorfer, CEO

Remember when you were a kid and your mom told you that time flies? You thought she was crazy, right? Well, this year has been a whirlwind of activity and I'm not sure how it's already November. Some highlights include my younger son going off to college and leaving me an empty nester, completing the middle mile backbone expansion, an Owner company growing their territory, and a DCN retirement. Plus, we've celebrated team members who are new and those improving their skills.

Details of the backbone expansion are in the main story of the newsletter, but I have to tell you how proud I am of the work our team has done this past year on the middle mile upgrade. The addition to our backbone has included long hours and many late nights. This expansion is crucial for traditional connectivity needs, but there's more to the story. As demands for various bandwidth-intensive applications like video streaming, artificial intelligence (AI), autonomy, and commerce grow, we are finding increased interest in dark fiber.

Dark fiber, in the simplest terms, is fiber optics that are laid but not in use; it's called "dark" because there is no light

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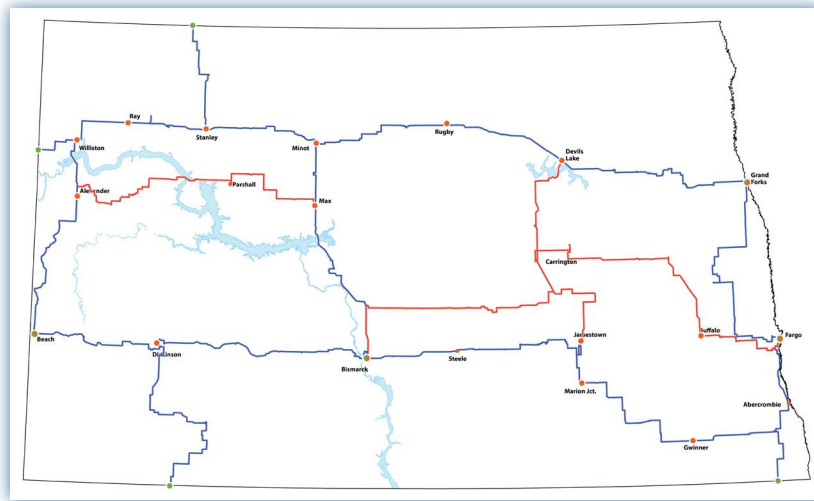
DCN COMPLETES CRUCIAL MIDDLE MILE ADDITION TO ITS BACKBONE

Last June we announced that DCN and four of our Owner companies – BEK Communications, Dakota Central, MLGC, and RTC Networks – were awarded a \$19.7 million grant from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). The grant had two components: adding middle mile fiber route miles and upgrading electronics to support the increased network demand to terabit speed.

We are pleased to announce that DCN's backbone expansion is complete. Over the past 15 months, more than 600 route miles of fiber have been installed. This takes DCN's backbone to just over 1,940 miles, which is enough to go from Fargo to Beach five and a half times!

The "middle mile" typically serves as the backbone for a region and does not directly connect end-user locations. Instead, it refers to the segment of a broadband network that connects the user's core network to the local network, connecting the global internet to the end user.

For DCN's portion of the grant, five new network segments were added: Bismarck to Carrington, Jamestown to Carrington, Devils Lake to Carrington, Fargo to Carrington, and Alexander to Max. The additional routes to DCN's middle mile backbone infrastructure are shown below in red.



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carrying data passing through it. You've likely seen news stories about the enormous connectivity needs of AI. AI companies want dark fiber connections to points of presence (POPs) because it provides the connectivity needed to support their applications with high speed and low latency. Through our partnerships in the wholesale arena, we reach major POPs in Seattle, Denver, Omaha, Minneapolis, and Chicago.

On the hyper-local level, the end of July brought big news out of the northwest corner of North Dakota when DCN Owner company Northwest Communications Cooperative announced that it's purchasing Nemont Telephone Cooperative's North Dakota telecom properties. This purchase will be beneficial to business and residential customers alike.

Over the years, many of you have worked with DCN Transport Engineer Gregg Retzer and know that there are few in this industry with more knowledge and expertise. He officially retired on November 1 and we thank him for 24 years of living out DCN's values while serving DCN, our Owners, and customers. We're also grateful that he gave us more than a year's notice and since then has worked diligently to pass on as much knowledge as possible before escaping North Dakota winters.

Speaking of winter, I'd better find my shovel, tune up the snowblower, and pull out my winter coat. You know how time flies!



MIDDLE MILE BACKBONE ADDITION, con't from page 1

The impact of this on DCN and Owner company customers is enormous.

"As a primarily rural state, all of North Dakota – residents, businesses, critical anchor and public safety entities, government agencies, and educational institutions – face extreme challenges without access to reliable, affordable, and fast broadband," said DCN CEO Seth Arndorfer. "This project provides connectivity to underserved areas allowing businesses to compete on state, regional, and national levels. On an individual level, North Dakotans will have better access to more living wage jobs, improved access to advanced medical and public safety services, and more educational opportunities."

Based on the current demand growth trends of existing customers, without these upgrades, DCN's network would begin to experience congestion within three to five years. Congestion would result in poor user experience, possibly to the point where critical applications are no longer usable. And those demand projections don't fully take into account the growing needs of emerging industries like precision agriculture, unmanned aerial systems, hyper-scalers, and others that require fast, reliable internet connections.

These upgrades will increase speed, redundancy, resiliency, and capacity by adding additional middle mile network equipment and outside plant infrastructure. All this will help North Dakota businesses grow and remain competitive.

Work now focuses on the equipment upgrades and cutovers. This is expected to last throughout 2025.

"Broadband is no longer considered a luxury," continued Arndorfer. "People have come to expect their connectivity to work, just like they expect the lights to come on when they flip the light switch. Whether you are studying at school, calling 9-1-1 for assistance, or running a transaction at your business, you need a reliable, affordable connection." ❁

Thanks, Gregg!

*The backbone upgrade was the last hurrah for long-time DCN Network Operations Center team member **Gregg Retzer**.*

After a long and accomplished career in the broadband industry (which began after a 20-year Air Force career) his last day was November 1 and he officially retired..

If you ever got a tour of DCN from Gregg, you learned not only about DCN, but the industry as a whole. His passion and knowledge were unmatched.

We thank Gregg for 24 years of reliable, responsive service to DCN, our Owners, and customers.



DCN PROMOTES, GROWS TEAM

In the last six months, DCN has promoted one employee and had three new people join the team.

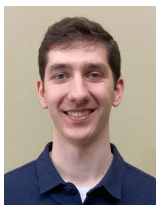
Anna Kalbus has been promoted to accounting manager, overseeing daily accounting processes, performing month-end and year-end close procedures, assisting with financial reporting and audits, and providing analytical support to the CFO and executive team. In addition, she oversees the daily workflow of the accounting team. Based in the Fargo office, Kalbus has 18 years of accounting experience. She joined DCN in 2016 as an accountant and was promoted to accountant II in August 2023. She earned a bachelor's degree from NDSU and an MBA from the University of Phoenix.

Sam Aannerud joined the Network Operations Center as an Ethernet/IP technician I in Bismarck. Aannerud is a graduate of Minot State University with a bachelor's degree in management information systems and a certificate in cyber defense. While at Minot State, he also earned PC Pro and Network Pro certifications from TestOut Corporation and was a participant and mentor in the Roger Looyenga Leadership Program. In addition, he completed technical internships at SRT Communications in Minot and DCN.

Shelby Jorgenson is the new executive/office assistant in the Bismarck office. Most recently, she was a business administrative specialist at a local engineering firm. Prior to that, she owned and managed a shipping store for a decade. Jorgenson studied graphic design and communications at Bismarck State College.

Callie Thompson joined the finance team as an accounting technician. Thompson earned a bachelor's degree in accounting and financial services and banking from the University of Mary, Bismarck. She has more than three years of experience, having served as an intern, accounting analyst, and accounts payable specialist at an electric cooperative and electrical supplies company. She is based in the Fargo office.

"The DCN team continues to grow and get stronger," said Seth Arndorfer, DCN CEO. "Anna has proven to be a strong leader on our finance team and we are excited to have her taking on new responsibilities. Sam, Shelby, and Callie have already proven to be great fits for our organization and their skills are going to be beneficial to DCN, our Owners, and customers in a variety of ways." ❁



L to R:
Anna Kalbus
Sam Aannerud
Shelby Jorgenson
Callie Thompson

SIMMONDS NAMED CFO

Adam Simmonds joined DCN as its new chief financial officer (CFO) in Fargo.

Simmonds, a certified public accountant, brings an accomplished background to DCN. For more than



a decade, he has served in finance-related leadership roles at construction companies in North Dakota and Illinois, and most recently as client accounting and

advisory services office leader/controller at CliftonLarsonAllen, the nation's eighth-largest accountancy firm.

At DCN, the CFO is an integral part of the executive team, accountable for a comprehensive set of financial responsibilities. The CFO establishes and maintains the company's financial policies and procedures, providing operational and administrative direction for accounting, budgeting, purchasing, billing, collections, and cash management. As CFO, Simmonds is also responsible for ensuring soundness of the company's financial structure and managing DCN's relationships with financial institutions and governmental agencies. He earned a bachelor's degree in accounting and finance from Minnesota State University Moorhead and has CPA licenses in North Dakota, Illinois, and Utah.

"We're excited to bring Adam back to North Dakota to be on the DCN team," said DCN CEO Seth Arndorfer. "Our industry requires more and more detailed reporting, particularly in federal programs, and Adam's background in finance and leadership will serve DCN and our Owner companies well as we move forward." ❁

TEAM EARNS CERTIFICATIONS

Four DCN employees earned industry certifications that will enhance their skills and help them serve customers even better.

Ethernet/IP technicians **Logan Mitchell** and **Barb Pfeifer** earned Nokia Certified Network Routing Specialist I (NRS I) certification. NRS I certification recognizes proficiency in managing and maintaining Nokia’s advanced network infrastructure in order to optimize network performance, enhance security, and address any network-related challenges.

Branden Rasmussen, cloud services specialist, recently completed CompTIA Linux+ certification, which includes CompTIA Systems Support Specialist and CompTIA Linux Network Professional, as well as Veeam Certified Architect (VMCA) certification. The CompTIA recognition validates his skills in managing,

securing, optimizing, and troubleshooting Linux systems, covering configuration, cloud operations, containerization, automation, and scripting. The VMCA certification focuses on managing and protecting virtual environments using Veeam backup, disaster recovery, and data management software.

Aparna Subramanian, information systems manager, completed Optical Communications Associate (OCA) certification through Ciena. This certification equips professionals with essential skills in optical network design and optimization, focusing on increasing network capacity and efficiency.

“At DCN, we encourage and support continuing education because it ensures innovation and growth,” said Seth Arndorfer, DCN CEO. “Technology changes quickly and we never know what changes and updates lie ahead. Continually training helps our team be prepared for whatever comes our way so we can best-serve customers.” ✨



L to R:
Logan Mitchell
Barb Pfeifer
Branden Rasmussen
Aparna Subramanian

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