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## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **Border State Bank: Broadband Makes It Possible**

How do you take a single location \$25M bank and grow it into seven locations with a \$350M portfolio? “You don’t do it without broadband, that’s for sure,” said Bob Hager, Chief Executive Officer of Border State Bank. “Broadband makes it possible.”

Hager is also an active member of the IMPACT 20/20 Taskforce for Broadband, which is working to increase high-speed Internet access region-wide. He has seen first-hand the impact high-speed broadband has had on his own bank and on rural businesses.

Creating a \$350M bank in a town with a population of 784 is no small feat, but Hager has found that broadband gives the bank the ability to do everything its urban counterparts do: online banking services, voice over data, “cyber-board meetings,” and remote capture. (With remote capture, depositors do not need to physically come into the bank. Deposits are transmitted electronically from the depositor’s location directly to the bank.)

Aside from the infrastructure, equipment and capabilities, there is another, often overlooked side of the equation; the human side. Hager maintains a flexible approach with his employees and with his board members. He has found that this flexible approach has really paid off.

Jill Amundson, Human Resource Director for Border State Bank, works out of her home, located on a river north of Baudette. The bank supplies her with a laptop, cell phone, and a high-speed broadband connection. “It works well for her and for us,” Hager said. “During the time she has worked for us, she has been able to be home to raise her child (now grown) and coordinate her husband’s business.”

Tammy Blawat, Border State Bank’s Chief Financial Officer, does most of her work during the summer months from her camper, which is parked at Lake Bronson State Park. Blawat finds that working from her camper is a “win-win.” Her time at the park is peaceful, and relatively free of distractions. “Quite frankly, for some work, you’re better off having some privacy...quiet time to focus,” Hager said. As with Amundson, the bank supplies Blawat with a laptop, cell phone and high-speed connection.

Erik Heggedal was an Ag Loan Banker with Border State Bank for a number of years. For a three-year stint, he processed loans out of his tractor and pick-up truck while actively farming.

“Letting employees work remotely with a broadband connection actually improves productivity and gives employees a real benefit, whether it’s for family reasons or other reasons,” Hager said. Looking forward, he sees the possibility of increasing the amount of employees working remotely. “I think it might help us attract even more good people.”

Broadband has also been a great tool for corporate board meetings. “Board members can meet from anywhere with a high-speed internet connection,” Hager said. “We’ve got board members and investors located all over. One of our board members even connects from his motor-home in Arizona.”

What impact is broadband having on rural businesses?

“It’s pretty significant,” Hager said. “Twenty-five percent of our customers are agriculture producers. Broadband has given them the ability to track weather in real time, use global positioning systems, do field mapping, and market commodities online. It’s a huge leap from the way farmers operated even ten years ago. Without these new tools, they’d have a hard time competing in the current economy.”

Small manufacturers are also seeing a huge impact from their use of broadband. “We see these companies becoming increasingly global in scope. Whether they are selling products online, working with an engineer in another state, or communicating with suppliers, they are using broadband to build business and leverage efficiencies.”

Hager plans to continue his work with the Taskforce for Broadband, which is part of a larger regional economic development effort called IMPACT 20/20. For more about IMPACT 20/20, and the Taskforce for Broadband, visit [www.impact2020.org](http://www.impact2020.org).