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STATE OF MINNESOTA

Department of  
Administration



**MNet<sup>SM</sup>**  
Minnesota's Public Sector  
Telecommunications Network

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## What is MNet?

MNet is the public sector telecommunications network that connects government agencies and educational facilities throughout Minnesota. Using state-of-the-art technology, MNet offers comprehensive voice, data and video services statewide.

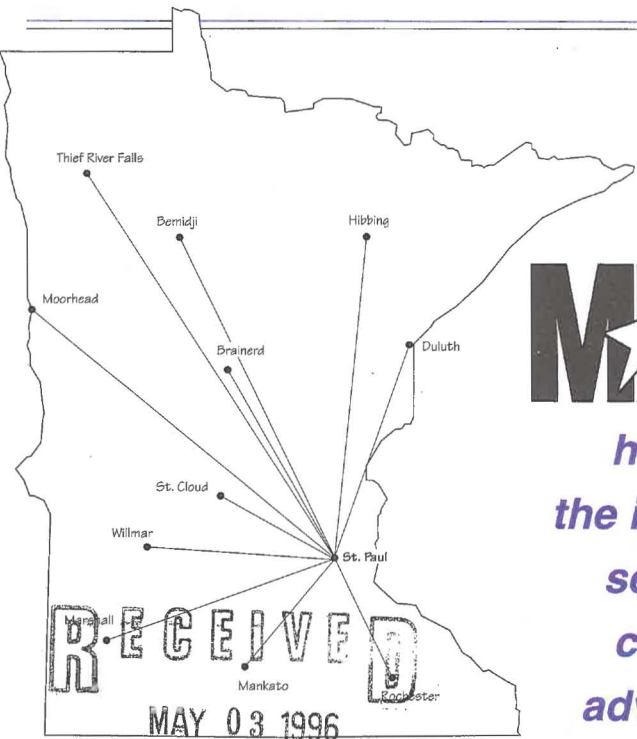
## Background

MNet evolved from 1989 legislation directing the Department of Administration to develop a statewide telecommunications network for voice, data and video services (Minn. Stat. 16B.465). To deliver these services cost-effectively, MNet achieves economies of scale by aggregating transport demand on network lines leased from local and long distance telephone companies.

MNet delivers high-speed, high-capacity telecommunications technology to a large base of public sector customers: counties, municipalities, libraries, state agencies, publicly owned community hospitals, K-12 public school districts, private schools and colleges, and higher education (technical and community colleges, and state universities).


The network's core is comprised of 12 regional hubs, connected by high-speed digital T1 lines leased from commercial carriers. Agencies access MNet by connecting to the closest hub. The 12 hub sites are located in St. Paul, Duluth, Rochester, St. Cloud, Bemidji, Marshall, Brainerd, Mankato, Hibbing, Willmar, Thief River Falls and Moorhead.

MNet is managed and operated by employees of the Telecommunications Division, part of Administration's InterTechnologies Group. The staff work closely with customers, providing their expertise in a variety of MNet services: videoconferencing, local and long distance, voice mail, 9-1-1, data access, consulting, and network management.



**Today**  
**MNet**  
*hubs deliver  
the information  
services and  
connectivity  
advantages ...*

*... impossible in  
yesterday's  
tangled,  
fragmented  
networks.*



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## Why MNet?

As a shared telecommunications network, MNet delivers several economic and operational benefits through reengineering government operations, expanding educational opportunities and reducing costs.



**Reengineering government operations**—MNet greatly increases information access and sharing among state agencies. Wide area connectivity provides access to a host of applications and the Internet. Sharing network resources reduces duplication—agencies managing offices statewide can share a single, centralized database. MNet has reengineered the way government does business—information access and sharing are only a few keystrokes away.

**Expanding educational opportunities**—Classroom facilities connected to MNet have access to a diverse range of educational information. Distance learning allows students to participate via interactive video in courses offered outside their area. For example, a student in Moorhead can take classes offered at the University of Minnesota's Minneapolis campus.

**Reducing costs**—MNet connects multiple agencies to a single transmission "pipe." Because sharing network capacity also shares costs, customers have access to a wide array of services at a reduced monthly expense. Cost-sharing also provides MNet services in Greater Minnesota at an economical rate. All state and local agencies can benefit from the economic advantages of shared connectivity.

#### **MNet Offers Significant Savings**

*Example:* Human Services MAXIS—56K line use from Lyon County/Marshall office to the Centennial Office Building computer in St. Paul:

**MNet savings: \$283 month**

*Example:* Pollution Control Agency—56K line use from Duluth office to St. Paul central office:

**MNet savings: \$210 month**

## **MNet Today**

As a viable participant in the telecommunications revolution, MNet has demonstrated its numerous advantages by leveraging the resources of a statewide network. Several partnerships comprised of government and education professionals have developed to examine strategies in using MNet's capabilities.

For example, *Access Minnesota* is a collaborative project of state and local government and the University of Minnesota Extension Service, which brings Internet access to more than 60 counties. The project seeks to familiarize citizens with Internet resources, as well as the telecommunications and information systems at federal, state, and local levels. *Access Minnesota* also helps communities organize task forces and create comprehensive telecommunications plans.

State government agencies use MNet services in a variety of ways to meet the daily requirements of business operations and improve the delivery of services:

- ❑ **Video Applications**—legislative hearings, telemedicine, training, distance learning, judicial hearings, planning, problem solving and decision making.
- ❑ **Data Applications**—medical claims processing, public assistance program support, child support enforcement, tax collection/refunds, licensing, and remote data base access.
- ❑ **Electronic Mail**—sending/receiving spread sheets, documents, data, images, and audio.

## **MNet Services and Products**

**Videoconferencing**—Full service videoconferencing is available in more than 80 statewide locations. A valuable tool in conducting meetings, training, workshops and hearings, interactive video technology combines audio, video and data communications. MNet's videoconferencing can reach sites throughout



Minnesota's Public Sector  
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**MNet services benefit 800 customers\*:**

Voice Services	500	customers*
Data/Video Services	225	customers*
Analog Data Network	75	customers*

*\*includes government entities and educational facilities*

<b>Videoconferencing sites</b>	<b>82</b>
Average monthly use	3000 hours
<b>Monthly long distance use</b> (2.5 M WATS; 2 M other long distance)	<b>4.5 million minutes</b>
<b>Regional Hubs</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Router connections</b>	<b>270</b>
<b>Multi-point control units</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>T1 lines connecting hubs</b>	<b>40</b>

the nation and around the world. InterTech's Network Operations Center staff monitor the network and coordinate conference scheduling.

**Data Services**—MNet's router network provides connectivity to remote LANs (local area networks), mainframes, and the Internet. MNet staff work directly with vendors to obtain wide area network hardware, simplifying access for customers. Local and 800 dial-up access—requiring only a telephone, modem and standard communications software—brings this connectivity to small offices, field personnel and telecommuters.

**Long Distance and Local Voice**—MNet offers competitively priced long distance services: calling cards, 800 numbers, student long distance plans, fax, and Language Line (a 24-hour interpretive service). The network aggregates long distance traffic to achieve the lowest rates and consolidates phone services into one easy-to-read invoice. MNet offers attractively priced local voice services through contracts with local exchange carriers.

**Voice Mail**—InterTech's voice messaging system is accessible anywhere from a touch-tone phone, 24 hours a day. Available with a variety of options, voice mail is offered throughout the metropolitan area, as well as in St. Cloud and Rochester. State agencies and county/city governments may purchase voice mail equipment through the statewide contract.

**9-1-1**—Minnesota is a national leader in 9-1-1 implementation. All 87 counties have 9-1-1 service, reaching 100 percent of the population. More than 80 percent of all Minnesotans are served by enhanced 9-1-1, which automatically displays a caller's location. To manage the \$6.5 million program, InterTech staff collect a monthly subscriber surcharge of 22¢ from 95 telephone companies; pay 850 monthly telephone bills for circuits and features; distribute nearly \$3 million in funds to county/city public safety answering points; and assess needs, resolve problems, and suggest improvements to 9-1-1 systems.

**Consulting Services**—InterTech offers consulting services in the design, installation and implementation of voice, data and video technologies. The consultants work with MNet product managers in needs assessment, systems design, specification development, planning, and system or service review.

**Network Management**—InterTech's Network Operations Center (NOC) serves as a centralized monitoring and management system. Network Center staff use specialized equipment to coordinate the design, installation and maintenance of Minnesota's largest private telecommunications network. By quickly isolating and resolving problems, NOC staff significantly reduce network downtime.





Minnesota's Public Sector  
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