

Broadband Alliance Public Outreach Meeting

Friday, Sept 8th, 2017 10 am-11:45 am

Call in Number: **641-715-3341** Access code: **108 1131#**

I. Call to Order

- A. Attendees: Dan Hamburg (5th District Supervisor), David Pai (Mendo College), Katie Gibbs (Community Foundation), Mike Nicolls (Access Sonoma Broadband), Rick Ehlert (OES), Diann Simmons (EDFC), Trish Steel
- B. Call-in: Lloyd Chasey (Gualala), Calvin Sandeen (Sonoma EDB), Michal Moore, Scott Ignacio (PA mayor), Kathy Wylie
- C. Hand-outs:
 - (1) Agenda
 - (2) Article by Harold Feld, 8/31/17, "FCC proposes to "fix" rural broadband by changing the definition."

II. Alliance and NBNCBC News

- A. Woodlands Fiber project
 - Woodlands state park needs connectivity to run their sewer project, and we thought it was an opportunity to get service to an unserved adjacent community (Road 408) as well.
 - Unfortunately, State parks has a master lease agreement with CalNet3 which requires parks use pre-approved vendors only. Approved vendors must be a certain large size and meet other requirements, and for the Woodlands project that means AT&T is the only option.
 - The project is being managed out of the State Parks Northern Service Center in Sacramento, and the manager says that although he always requests service for the surrounding community in these projects (park employees need connectivity)...that unfortunately that never happens.
 - And finally, State Parks does not have the funding for the necessary trenching that is needed on 2 miles of Woodlands property anyway, so the project is dead for that reason.
 - It was suggested that there may be a variety of state contracts instead of CalNet3, such as federal vendors and California GSA contracts. It may also be worth connecting with Heather (Congressman Huffman's rep) about it.
- B. Westport outreach
 - Westport is one of our communities identified for outreach/projects, and the focus is to get enough people interested broadband and to know that there are now options available.
 - The Alliance and a provider attended the Westport BBQ and talked to folks about broadband, and we will be doing some follow-up.
- C. Fort Bragg Tech Committee

- Fort Bragg interested in better broadband, especially for the downtown core, and has organized a tech committee. They have had one meeting so far.
- D. Assembly “Select Committee on Investment and Broadband in Rural California” Informational Hearing
- This hearing was held at the end of August, and Anna Caballero is the Chair of the 11-member committee (other committee members include Assemblymembers Curry, Dahle, Limon, Gray, Garcia, Gallagher, Flora, Eggman, Bigelow, Arambula)
 - The hearing included speakers from the PUC, a consortia, Ca Telehealth Network, USDA, and UC Extension.
 - The UC extension presenter was the “chief Innovation office” for UC, who looks for new technologies and providers, and does pilot projects. I made email introductions for him with the Traxyl CEO and 2 of our providers, and suggested pilot studies in Mendocino County.
 - This committee seems to be replacing the Select Committee on the Digital Divide, which our Assemblymember Jim Wood formerly chaired. Jim now intends to focus on health issues instead.
- E. Broadband and business?
- Business is a natural ally, but It has been hard connecting with the Chambers of Commerce. The West Company is very much open and wanting to work together and included Trish in a meeting with some investors who want to start an accelerator project in Mendo.
 - School and Wifi - Kathy raised the question about school districts using wifi for nearby residents who may lack broadband. Trish will follow-up on that and find out what is currently being done.
 - Kathy also brought up that the USDA is requiring agriculture to provide water specific reporting information so there's a growing need from the Ag sector to increase connectivity. Sonoma County wants to leverage federal USDA dollars with SGMA projects (the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act established to provide a framework for sustainable, local groundwater management). Trish will follow-up and try to arrange a meeting with the USDA rep with Ag interests in Mendocino.

III. Broadband Working Group (BWG)

- A. Broadband Plan Update - ideas and input
- Next meeting will be in October to discuss the Broadband Plan. Any ideas and input are welcome.

IV. Legislation

- A. AB 1665 - Internet For All Now Act
- This is the “Internet For All Now Act” which would re-authorize the state broadband program, funded through a cell phone surcharge (average of 17 cents a month/line).
 - What started out as a good bill which we supported - has changed through the amendment process into a bill we can no longer support and are actively opposing. There are now many “give-aways” to the large carriers, and barriers for independent smaller providers to name one of the many issues. Former “supporters turned opposed” include our consortium, Rural County Representatives of CA (RCRC) and California State Association of Counties (CSAC).
 - It already passed the Assembly, and easily moved out of the Senate Utilities Committee (Senator McGuire abstained from voting). It is set for a Senate floor vote any day now (it needs a 2/3 majority) and will likely pass.

- B. SB 649 - Small Cell Bill
 - This is the “Small Cell Bill” that would give telecoms companies/mobile carriers open access to poles and other property owned by public agencies, such as cities and counties, and set rental rates far below market value.
 - City governments are very strongly opposed because it takes away local control of these contracts. Our Board of Supervisors submitted a letter on 8/29 opposed to it.
 - It has passed out of the Senate, and is set to pass on the Assembly floor soon. It only needs a simple majority to pass.
- C. AB 375 - Internet privacy
 - This is the bill that writes into California law Internet privacy protections that were scrapped by the federal government. Generally, larger providers are opposed to it (they would not be able to use and resell subscriber info) while consumer groups and smaller ISPs are in favor of it.
 - This has passed the Assembly (Wood voted in favor) and is stuck in a Senate rules committee. The deadline for a vote is Sept 15.
- D. National - Net Neutrality
 - Comment Deadline was 8/31 and there were a record-breaking 21 million comments, although evidently some of the comments were fake.
 - Net Neutrality will very likely be overturned, as Chairman Pai is committed to such action and he has a majority on the FCC.
 - Someone asked what other countries do in this regard (if someone does research please let me know!). It was mentioned that Hungary is dealing with these same issues.

V. California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) Update

- A. Rural Call Completion - *Phase 2 initiated*
 - Rick (our OES Coordinator) attended the Working Group meeting in Sacramento to discuss outage reporting issues. Trish listened in via conference line. This working group is part of the Rural Call Completion Dec 2016 Decision requirements.
 - Rural counties are concerned about this issue because the FCC reporting thresholds are so high that for a rural area with lower population densities to have a “reportable” outage (in “user-minutes”) the outage would be prolonged before the telcos would have to report it. The FCC threshold is currently 900,000 user-minutes before an outage is reportable. The PUC Decision in December of 2016 required standing data reports to the PUC on outages of 90,000 minutes, which the telcos are opposed to.
 - Although Rick is fairly new to his position and was not here during the big outages, he felt that CPUC staff seemed responsive/interested in Mendocino County concerns. He also stated that local officials do not get reporting from state 911 during outages, but that AT&T is getting better at identifying outages to our county, and fixing them.
 - Having outage reports go through the state would be important though, so that there is a capture of statistics.
 - The PUC will decide the next steps, and there will likely be additional meetings. Rick would like to get our dispatch director to attend as well, because she is directly involved when these things happen.
 - Trish feels like there should be more local representation on this working group, as required in the Decision.
- B. Pole Access proceeding

- This proceeding opened about a month ago, and it's actually a Rule-making and an "Order Instituting Investigation" all in one, and it also continuation of an earlier proceeding.
 - This has caused confusion, because it's one document, but each has different deadlines, and different phases even.
 - It has been difficult to find out info, and questions to the PUC public advisor have not been returned.
 - The Alliance wants to comment in this proceeding, and our interest stems from our belief that difficulty in pole access creates a barrier for broadband deployment by independent and smaller ISPs.
 - A few other comments on this issue included that when you take pictures of damaged poles and submit to CPUC, the poles get fixed within 2 months.
 - Kathy mentioned that there are PGE franchise agreements in the county, which should be researched more.
- C. CenturyLink-L3 merger
- The concern about this merger is that CA will lose a significant source of dark fiber - as CenturyLink and Level 3 are two of the four major long haul fiber owners (ATT, Verizon are the others) on key California routes, and L3 is the only independent operator.
 - The CPUC as identified the wholesale fiber crunch as a "root cause of California's highly concentrated residential broadband market."
 - My understanding is that after the merger, they will be allowed to stop leasing dark fiber, and existing leases are only protected for 2 years (until Dec. 2019).
 - Longer term contracts may or may not be protected, as they often have embedded into them cancellation clauses.
 - 2 Consumer groups dropped protests in exchange for feeble concessions - "aspire" to spend money on upgrades/expansion in underserved communities (but no oversight).
 - They wanted to "fast track" the review process, but luckily that didn't happen.

VI. Other updates

- A. CalTrans Working Group - Mike
- The working group is a result of the passage of AB1549 last year, and the purpose is to provide a framework for sharing conduit in CalTrans Rights-of-way (a modified Dig-Once).
 - There is currently no single, clear "dig-once" policy, and a better term might be "dig smarter." There are some good examples out there, such as San Francisco and Salinas. The stakeholders are being asked to review suggested guidelines.
 - CalTrans also has an online map which shows upcoming projects - <https://caltrans.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=11293df57acf40c99479aa9f466ce9ba>
- B. First Net -
- ATT won the nationwide RFP for a wireless public safety network and delivered all state plans in mid-June to the governors. States have limited time to "opt-in" or "opt-out" of FirstNet; 20 states have "opted-in" in already. California held outreach meetings around state to get feedback from public safety on California's plan, and then that feedback will be incorporated and delivered to the Governor by Sept 19th. Then Governor Brown has 90 days to decide what Ca will do (mid-December). Ca has a FN board and state plan advisory committee, which will make a recommendation to the governor.

- ATT will use their existing infrastructure of 64,000 sites and 150 MHz of spectrum, and FN will add 20 MHz more in Band 14, for 170 MHz total spectrum. They have also pledged \$40 billion investment as well.
 - Even if Ca “opts-in,” each individual public safety agency will have the opportunity to decide for themselves whether they want to use the network.
 - On August 18th - Verizon issued a press release that they are also building and operating their own private public safety network with priority and pre-emption services similar to what FirstNet will be providing, which will operate separately from their commercial network. This network can compete against AT&T’s network.
 - Verizon wireless is building out infrastructure which includes cell towers on wheels for emergencies, and micro cell towers to increase coverage.
- C. Broadband Provider and other updates
- Comcast has new enhancements to their Internet Essentials program for low-income families. Please spread the word if you know families in the Comcast footprint that could benefit from the program. Some of the enhancements include access to Wifi hotspots and increased speed.
 - AT&T provided an update in August that they are deploying Satellite Cell on Light Truck (Sat COLT) to fire scenes to support wireless communications. They also provide supplies, such as phones, tablets, charging stations, tents, water and ice for the emergency shelters and Red Cross staff.
 - AT&T will also be providing Trish with an update on their CAF2 builds for our county.
 - SeaKay is deploying broadband from Fort Bragg north to Westport. Contact their website if you are interested in service.
 - David Pai (Mendocino College Computer Science Professor) shared info about a new certificate program being offered at the college as an “IT specialist.” This is a 6 class (3 semesters) certification that counts towards an Associate’s degree.
 - Rick from OES said that they are looking at a long-term capital project to upgrade the microwave communications equipment to provide more bandwidth.
 - EDFC has been awarded a \$500,000 loan fund from USDA (this is not a grant, it must be re-paid to USDA with interest). This fund program allows them to make individual loans up to \$150,000, but this particular program does not allow Ag business loans (although their micro-loan program does).
- D. Lake County Broadband Solutions project
- Trish has been following a project in Lake County to build a locally owned and operated secure wireless and fiber optic broadband network covering virtually all of Lake County homes, businesses, schools, medical and government facilities. It is currently in the funding state.
 - The project will use a wireless backbone using multiple legs (could deliver 1 gig across the backbone) and the main backbone will serve sub-networks with speeds of 200 Mbps downstream and Internet phone service. There will be 7 categories of service offered (including low cost).

VII. Access Sonoma Broadband Update - Mike Nicholls

- A. Sonoma County has hired Magellan Advisors to develop a Broadband Strategic Plan for the county. They have pulled together an Advisory Committee which meets for the first time on Tuesday, and next week they will also hold focus groups with all the major industries, and an educational workshop. The goal is to get input on broadband needs for the plan.

One member of the Advisory Committee is a retired Time Magazine reporter who is with a Sonoma Foothills Homeowners Association, and whose community has poor broadband. He is working to prove to the PUC that the upload/download speeds are substandard.

VIII. Future Agenda items and Final Comments

- A. No one had suggestions for future agenda items. Please feel free to email Trish with any topics you would like to see discussed at a future meeting.

IX. Next meeting: November 3rd, 2017