

Steering Committee Meeting Notes

Friday, June 7 10:00 am – 11:30 am

The Community Foundation of Mendocino County

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(If you have problems dialing in, try dialing (805) 360-1075 first,
then the regular number, then #, and then access code and # again)

1. Call to Order: 10:00 am

- a. Attendees: Brandon Merritt (CEO), Carole Brodsky, Dan Hamburg, Jim Moorehead, John Goldsmith, Mike Nicholls, Susanne Norgard, Trish Steel
- b. Call-in: Heidi Dickerson, Greg Jirak
- c. Guests: Phil Dow (Executive Director, Mendocino Council of Governments), Doug McCorkle (North Coast Railroad Authority)
- d. Changes to agenda: none

2. Golden Bear Broadband update - Jim

- a. Mitch Drake, CEO of Golden Bear Broadband (GBB) has a meeting with CPUC staff in San Francisco today, and will call Jim with an update as soon as he can.
- b. To Jim, it appears highly unlikely that GBB will get approved as submitted. This is a disappointment for all of us, and could potentially have a huge negative impact on the economy and citizens of northern California in the foreseeable future.
- c. There are two CPUC staff reviewers working on the GBB application and from the last email communication with Mitch it seems that of the 2300 miles of fiber in GBB (1100 miles of new build, and 1200 miles of leasing existing dark fiber) only 100 miles would be reimbursable through the grant program according to current CASF guidelines. The 1200 miles of leased fiber is considered a capital investment but apparently dark fiber is not reimbursable. Of the 1100 miles of new build, the challengers have been successful in eliminating 1000 miles because of claims of building through Served areas and unfair competition. This does not make for a sustainable business plan.
- d. The strategy moving forward involves a regulatory and legislative aspect; they are separate things but also very connected.
- e. Legislatively we will continue to work on SB 740. As originally written and strongly supported by the Alliance, the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors and other groups, SB 740 provided \$225 million in funding to the California Advanced Services Fund for broadband deployment projects in both underserved and unserved areas of California. The bill was subject to heavy lobbying from the telcos and is now a shadow of its former self. As amended, \$100 million of that funding amount has been removed, and underserved areas have been removed as being eligible for funding, leaving only unserved areas. The only remaining element the Alliance supported is relaxation of the CPCN & WIR barriers to entry.
- f. The bill is currently in the State Assembly at the Assembly Utilities and Commerce Committee, and all letters regarding SB 740 would go to this committee/

- g. Phil asked why only 100 miles of the GBB application were recommended for approval, and not the other 1000. This led to a discussion of the CPUC maps and the “mapping problem.” Basically, the state uses “advertised service data” as supplied by the telcos which shows most of Mendocino County already covered by adequate broadband, and therefore CPUC can’t use their funds to “over-build” where there is already service according to the faulty mapping data. The problem of course is that the “advertised” service areas do not represent the service that is actually available to people and businesses (“ground truth data”). The CPUC is accepting flawed data and no one else except the carriers can have input. The CPUC data is uploaded to the federal NTIA database every 6 months, so the FCC/NTIA mapping is also flawed.
- h. The current mapping database rules are designed so that if there is one served address within a Census Block Group (CBG), then the entire CBG is considered “served.” This accounts for the huge discrepancy between the “ground truth” maps and the “advertised service” maps. Unfortunately, the CPUC (and other state and federal agencies) uses the “advertised service” maps, as submitted by the carriers, to make their funding decisions.
- i. Greg is now on the CPUC Broadband Mapping Working Group, and they are proposing for the CPUC to go down to the address (parcel) level; if they do that and have proper data collection, and include it in the decision-making process, it will solve the problem.
- j. This also fits in with the collaborative grant application that we have submitted to Caltrans with MCOG and MCOE, as it would provide funding for a survey of broadband access of Mendocino County for all K-12 students, faculty and staff, and the data from this survey would produce a “ground truth” map.
- k. Greg noted that the distinction between “underserved” and “unserved” is an artificial division, because if you are underserved, you still don’t have enough bandwidth to run your business and meet all your needs.
- l. One of Doug’s sons has a friend with a Ph.D in communications technology and had a contract with the US government to review broadband technology. He seems very knowledgeable and may be available to assist us. This man noted a common experience all over the country: the big carriers were always trying to put a stop to coop utilities and municipal networks by suing them. His overall comment about broadband: It’s all political. Doug will introduce Jim to him via email.
- m. Doug also mentioned WiMax technology, and wondered whether this is something that the Alliance has explored. He said that in Michigan they are doing this over the top of fiber optic cable. The Alliance Technology Chair, Brian, was not at the meeting today so we’ll get his opinion on it later. Jim said that WiMAX will still need backhaul (middle mile), that the bandwidth has to come over the fiber before it can be distributed.
- n. What is WiMax? (some of this is from the web, all of it was not necessarily discussed at the meeting):
Wikipedia: WiMax (Worldwide Interoperability for Microwave Access) is a wireless communications standard designed to provide 30 to 40 megabit-per-second data rates.

WiMAX is described as "a standards-based technology enabling the delivery of last mile wireless broadband access as an alternative to cable and DSL"

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WiMAX>

And from WiMax.com: As the first 4G wireless technology, WiMAX combines the performance of WiFi with the range and quality of service (QOS) of a carrier-grade cellular technology. WiMAX can provide broadband wireless access (BWA) up to 30 miles for fixed stations, and 3-10 miles for mobile stations. In contrast, the WiFi wireless local area network standard is limited in most cases to only 100-300 feet.

In emerging markets and rural areas, WiMAX is being deployed as a fixed wireless technology to provide basic internet connectivity to residential and business users, without the cost and difficulty of deploying fiber or DSL. In this fixed capacity, the technology can provide backhaul connectivity for Wi-Fi hotspots and other IP enabled devices such as VoIP phones and video surveillance cameras. In more developed markets, WiMAX is being used as a mobile wireless technology by large carriers and operators.

WiMAX and 4G technologies are also being utilized by a new breed of non-traditional operators including municipalities, local & state governments, utilities, enterprise customers and other verticals. Interest is being driven by new wireless applications including SmartGrids, remote education, tele-medicine, connectivity for M2M (machine-to-machine) devices, digital signage, ITS (intelligent transportation systems), and much more. <http://www.wimax.com/what-is-wimax/>

- o. Brandon gave an update about a meeting in Sacramento with Jackie Kinney, the staffer for Senator Padilla (SB 740). The meeting was set up by the lobbying organization that Mendocino County recently re-joined, the Rural Counties Representatives in California (RCRC). Meeting with Jackie Kinney at the RCRC office was Brandon, Greg Jirak, Mitch Drake, Cathy Emerson and from RCRC, Paul Smith and Staci Heaton. Jim gave credit to Greg and Mike of Sonoma Connect for producing a 40-plus page document that they took to that meeting.
- p. They felt that it was important to meet with Jackie face to face, and discuss why the amendments to SB 740 that were introduced on May 7th are so dis-advantageous to our county and northern California in general:
 - i. \$100 million has been taken out from the original bill that was to go into the CASF account for broadband infrastructure.
 - ii. Two concepts were introduced into the bill that were not in the original bill: "middle-mile" was introduced and deemed eligible for funds but only if it could be proved that it served a last mile broadband provider in an unserved area, and only unserved areas, and not underserved areas, are eligible for funding.
 - iii. The problem with this language is that there are practically NO areas of the state that are considered unserved because of the vastly inaccurate maps.

- iv. Paul Smith, the RCRC lobbyist said exactly the same thing, and that was a very good thing as RCRC is a respected organization. The Sonoma County lobbyist will also meet with her and she will hear the same message from them.
 - v. At the end of their discussion, Jackie invited them to give her proposed amendments to re-introduce back into the bill through the legislative process. The bill is currently at the Assembly Utilities and Commerce Committee, and should be voted on in the last week in June.
- q. Dan is concerned about Padilla's political ambitions, knowing how powerful the telcos are in Sacramento. The steps we are taking legislatively are absolutely necessary, and we can't not do them, but it's going to take a real push in the Assembly. Mike talked to Mady (staffer for Chesbro) and she was asking about the timing of the vote, so it sounds like Chesbro is on board. Wes is the longest-serving member of the Assembly, and he has some clout.
 - r. Incredibly, Padilla told Supervisor Carillo (Sonoma County) that this was the first that he has heard about problems with rural broadband, so that's concerning to Dan. Mike mentioned that he, Jim, Paul Yoder and Steve Sharpe met with Jackie (Padilla's staffer) for a meeting in March, so that she has heard all of this information before.
 - s. (Not said at the meeting, but found on the web subsequently is money from ATT to Senator Padilla (<http://warmsouthernbreeze.wordpress.com/2012/04/22/examining-corporate-corruption-in-america-att-in-californias-legislature/>)

3. Public awareness

- a. Greg met south coast political cartoonist Steve Oliff recently and Steve has agreed to work with the Alliance on our communications strategy. Jim had several of his cartoons mounted and on display for the meeting, and these cartoons were also on the cover packet of information that they took to their meeting with Jackie Kinney. (attached)
- b. Jim was also inspired by two videos he saw at the Mendocino Film Festival that was held this past weekend: Chasing Ice and Bidder 70. Chasing Ice was created by a National Geographic photographer who wanted to explain the complex technical story of climate change by using visual imagery. It was a three year project, with digital cameras that took photos every 15 minutes mounted in various locations in Iceland, Greenland, northern Canada and Alaska. The effect was powerful and emotional. Bidder 70 was about the Salt Lake City, Utah BLM oil and gas leasing auction in 2009 when an activist bid on a large number of the leases illegally. He was arrested, ultimately convicted, and served 21 months in federal prison. But, civil disobedience and street theater raised public awareness and the result was that the existing leases were cancelled.
- c. In strategizing our media campaign, we should remember that Mendocino County has many creative people: artists, musicians, storytellers, and there is a strong anti-corporate sentiment. None of these broadband corporations are even headquartered in California but are out of state (AT&T is headquartered in Dallas, Texas; Verizon is headquartered in Manhattan, NYC; Comcast is headquartered in Philadelphia, PA)
- d. If SB 740 and Golden Bear Broadband both go down, Jim plans to ask various strategic-thinking people he knows to come up with a communications strategy. It was suggested

that Sean McLaughlin (ED Access Humboldt) to also be included in this group, and Mike said that that he would also like to be included.

- e. Dan and Heidi gave an update on the EB5 application status. Heidi's last news was that it was "under review", (and that's the most movement that she has ever heard) so we will hope for the best. Possibly we might hear something this week or next. Thanks Heidi for your work on this!
- f. Dan added that Joseph Kong's interest in Mendocino County has not waned even with all the Golden Bear Broadband challenge issues; he will be up next Tuesday as he is interested in the Trinity School complex and turning it into an assisted living facility. The building has been vacant for about five years, and it's a great idea but would be costly to make all the required changes.
- g. Jim asked Phil when he might expect to hear about the MCOG/MCOE/CalTrans grant, to which Phil replied that in the last few years they usually hear something in August, and only after the Caltrans budget is out.
- h. Dan volunteered to check in with Sunne McPeak (President of CETF) about the grant, SB740 and GBB as it would be a good idea to stay in communication with her.

4. Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) recharging Stations

- a. Phil brought up that MCOG now has a draft plan, received yesterday, and funded by the MCOG's Transportation Work Program that was a consultant study to identify locations for electrical vehicle recharging stations along all the highways in Mendocino County. Similar plans have been completed/are ongoing in Sonoma County, Marin, Humboldt, and Del Norte counties. We decided to pursue this to find the logical places to put the stations, the appropriate distances between them, and so now we have a plan. The person who knows the work model and details is Janet Orth (former board member of REDI). Another thing that happened is that Phil was sitting next to Steve Heminger, Phil's counterpart as the Executive Director of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, with nine counties in the Bay Area. They were discussing their respective issues, and for Steve it is greenhouse gas emissions. Phil said that they could help each other, because people in the bay area would be more willing to invest in electric vehicles (thus reducing greenhouse gas emissions) if they can be guaranteed that they can get out of the Bay area without getting stranded without a recharging station. Phil is willing to spend our planning money to figure out where to put these recharging stations, but we don't have money for infrastructure. If they spend some of their infrastructure money in the outlying areas (including Mendocino County) that will help them with their issue of reducing greenhouse gases by making people willing to invest their money in new technology vehicles, having that assurance that they can get around the rest of California.
- b. Greg brought up the point that even at these recharging stations that have power, you still need bandwidth to do things like pay for your charging with a credit card. Bandwidth is needed at every charging station in order to make them useful.
- c. Keith Rutledge (Director of REDI) is working with greenlots.com, which manage and distribute these recharging stations, and the California Office of Policy Research, to create the *ZEV Regional Readiness Plan*. Jim and Keith have a call scheduled next week

with OPR and Greenlots to educate them of the hard cold facts about rural connectivity. In rural areas, if fiber, wireless or cellular not available, using landline to hook up is not a good solution, because in a few years the copper lines might be gone so it isn't a long term solution.

- d. In Gualala, it frequently happens that merchants can't run their credit cards; without a broadband plan, these recharging stations won't have a way to reliably be able to make those charges.
- e. Jim asked Phil (or Janet, as the case may be) to coordinate with Greg and Trish so that the Alliance knows the locations of all the proposed electric vehicle charging stations and roadside call boxes, and to have those locations included in our Broadband Access Inventory.
- f. Phil was asked if all the roadside call boxes were being switched over to satellite connections, but the answer is only in those places where there is no and/or unreliable cellular service because the satellite is much more expensive (each box is \$60/month, versus pennies for their cellular service). We are the first in the nation to deploy these satellite systems, and the first place here in Mendocino County will be on Hwy 162 going out to Covelo and then on Hwy 20 from Fort Bragg to Willits.
- g. At that point Jim brought up our county long-range fiber backbone planning map, and on that map Hwy 162 is marked for fiber. When we build that, there could be drop-off points at these call boxes, and MCOG could be a subscriber to this network.
- h. Greg brought up that as we move forward, there will be a preponderance of evidence that we really need fiber along all of the major transportation corridors, as these are the same places that the FirstNet will need coverage for public safety as well. Our goal is to get the entire county inventoried as to where we need fiber, no matter who it is and where it is.
- i. Last item, Carole reported that she handed the Congressman Huffman a letter proposing that he do a town hall meeting on broadband in his district, like he just did a few weeks ago on Medicare. She is waiting for his response.

5. Meeting Adjourned at 11:30

Next meeting: June 28th

No meeting June 14th, and 21st