

Steering Committee Meeting Notes

Friday, February 15th, 2013 10:00 am – 11:40 am

The Community Foundation of Mendocino County

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then the regular number, then #, and then access code and # again)

1. Call to Order: 10:00 am

- a. Attendees: Brian Churm, Carol Brodsky, **Doug McCorkle (NCRA)**, Jeff Tyrell, Jim Moorehead, Jim Robinson, John Goldsmith, John Kuhry, Mike Nicholls, Ruth Valenzuela, Trish Steel
- b. Call-in: Connie Stewart, Greg Jirak, Mitch Drake, Randy McDonald
- c. Guest: Phil Dow (Executive Director for Mendocino Council of Governments (MCOG)),
- d. Changes to agenda: addition of updates/introductions of Connie Stewart and Phil Dow

2. Golden Bear Broadband NCRMMI/R1CP update

- a. Mitch Drake gave a general sketch of the Golden Bear Broadband LLC project. The application to the California Advances Services Fund was submitted four days ahead of the deadline. The project spans the sixteen northern counties and includes 2300 miles of fiber, with a combination of 1000 miles of new construction and the remainder of the miles lighting up “dark fiber” that is already in existence. The project would connect community institutions and help local Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to expand out. The LLC is formed, and the owners are Siskiyou Telephone Co and NativeOne Financial. They have applied for their Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN).
- b. Phil Dow asked about what specific counties were included in the 16 counties, because the MCOG is part of a state super-region that includes 16 northern California counties for the purpose of communication about projects of common interests (<http://www.superregion.org/>). From their website: “The North State Super Region is a unique region that has opportunities and challenges not seen elsewhere in California.” Phil suggested that a letter of support from this super-region as a possibility for future projects.

3. MCOG/MCOE Transportation Planning Grant – Phil Dow

- a. Phil Dow gave an update about the Caltrans planning grant that was submitted to MCOG from the Mendocino County Office of Education (Steve Turner) in collaboration with the Alliance. There is always some type of match required on these grants for which MCOG would be responsible. MCOG staff is going through the applications that have been submitted to determine which ones they will support, and will go before the MCOG board on March 4th. The MCOG board consists of two members from the Board of Supervisors and one appointee from each city council.
- b.

4. Vision Mendocino 2030 – Phil Dow - <http://www.visionmendocino2030.org/> -

- a. MCOG's Vision Mendocino 2030 is a long-range, community-driven vision for sustainable change in Mendocino County through the year 2030. This vision will integrate planning for housing, jobs, transportation, and the environment in the County. Vision Mendocino 2030 is part of a Statewide regional Blueprint Planning program funded by the California Department of Transportation (from their website).
- b. Vision Mendocino 2030 is an MCOG project, and Phil gave a little bit of the history behind it. The Sacramento Council of Governments was going through a process to determine their vision for the next 30 years, gathering public input, looking at various issues, and deciding where to put their growth to avoid urban sprawl, linking actual land use and transportation planning and development. The legislature liked what they were doing, and wanted everyone else to do this too, so they created incentives for the rural areas in the form of SB 375.
- c. Phil feels that SB 375 has had minimal impact in Mendocino county because we have been and are already doing a lot of these things, but it would jeopardize funding if we don't participate in this planning process.
- d. Vision Mendocino 2030 has a strong GIS planning component, creating GIS layers as a planning tool. About a year and a half ago, the MCOG went to seven communities: the four cities plus Boonville, Laytonville, and Covelo to gather input about what residents want as far as their vision for the future. They gathered that information, brought it back, developed a number of strategies, and now are taking it back out to get input on these strategies.
- e. There are three problem with the process:
 - i. Loss of momentum as the input was taken over a year ago.
 - ii. Communities don't see their growth because it is small, but it's there even though it's only projected to be .5% per year.
 - iii. There are no new staggering ideas; they are simply intensifying the ideas that have already been developed and using different strategies. They have developed a website for the vision which includes a survey, and are open to input (<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Visionmendocino2030>)
- f. Phil stated that in communities where they went to get input, lack of adequate broadband was a concern because it's also an economic development issue, especially in the areas of Laytonville, Covelo, and Point Arena. All this data was gathered with town hall meetings, and going out and putting up meeting notices where people will see them. Phil will get a flyer to the Alliance for help in spreading the word.
- g. Every 5 years MCOG has to develop a Regional Transportation Plan and come up with greenhouse gas goals; having adequate broadband access and telecommuting fit in with reducing greenhouse gases.
- h. MCOG also is responsible for the call boxes that are found along the highways, and are concerned with some of the rural roads where they cannot get cell service.
- i. Randy is the Alliance liaison for the Office of Emergency Services (OES) and is on the communications committee, and he spoke about the objectives of the OES:
 - i. Establish wireless broadband access along the major roadways
 - ii. Establish such service at various public safety facilities

- iii. Work with large landowners to further extend this network, coordinating with the local broadband effort (ie, the Alliance) to anticipate what would be the best way to extend that public safety network here in the county, and integrating that network into the FirstNet program.
- j. Randy also informed the group that our Public Safety contact, Sergeant Shannon Barney, has been promoted but it was announced this week that Greg Glavitch has been hired to replace him.

5. **Planning for 2013**

- a. Mendocino County Broadband Plan (MCBP)
 - i. The Mendocino County Fiber Backbone Plan is part of the MCBP, and the Alliance is reaching out to everyone to find out where broadband is needed. At a minimum we want a fiber county broadband network, and initially last mile would probably be a combination of some fiber and mostly wireless (with the long term goal of fiber to all public and private facilities and residences).
- b. Money available through the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), and if the Golden Bear project is approved, 86% of money will be a grant coming from the PUC to build the infrastructure.
- c. Phil spoke about the history of MCOG and how economic development was a part of their mission. The MCOG was established by a Memorandum of Understanding signed by the county and all four cities, and although their main purpose is for transportation issues, their secondary purpose is for economic development (but without specifics). There are aspects that fit into bringing better broadband to Mendocino County from a transportation perspective, including improving air quality and economic development.
- d. Phil would like the Alliance to come to the MCOG meeting March 4 and make a pitch for the economic development aspect of broadband, as he feels that it is a good fit with the purpose of MCOG.. Jim Moorehead, Brian Churm, Greg Jirak and John Kuhry from the Alliance will attend this meeting.

6. **Connie Stewart, Humboldt State University, Redwood Coast Connect Broadband Consortium (RCCBC)**

- a. Connie Stewart is Executive Director of California Center for Rural Policy at Humboldt State University. She is also responsible for the RCCBC and called in to give the Alliance an update on the CASF applications now at the CPUC.
- b. She started by saying that the Broadband Alliance of Mendocino County “rocks!”, and that we are doing a fabulous job here, and are getting things done at an accelerated pace. As an example, she said that it took Humboldt County eight years before they were working on an infrastructure project, and we have an application in within two years.
- c. That said, she continued to say that there has been an overwhelming response in this second round of infrastructure grants. There is \$158 million available, and \$257 million worth of proposals turned in (\$4.1 million for loans, the rests for grants), so the

competition for this money will be high. It is also not clear if there will be a round three, or if we have to wait until next year.

- d. The Golden Bear project grant request is \$119 million, so it sticks out relative to the other applications. WE don't know whether this is a problem or not.
- e. CASF staff will begin a 30-day thorough reviewing process, and if they do it as they have done in the past it will be interactive, and they will ask the applicants questions. Different staffers get assigned to different applications; Connie doesn't know who is assigned to our region yet.
- f. This is when the work really begins, as we know the competition is tough and we may get requests that need a rapid response.
- g. A 30-day comment period is also happening as well. This is the chance for another provider to comment on an application and list a conflict. For example, an incumbent telecom can say that an area is already served and that CASF should reject the application. The thirty day period begins from the original application period. There is still an opportunity to get letters of support for a project in during this 30-day comment period.
- h. Connie will send Jim and Greg an email with a link for all the proposals so we can see them; there was one other application from Mendocino County (Willits Online) as well as another one that covered four counties.
- i. Most projects were either for last mile, or a combination of middle mile and last mile. Only two projects were strictly middle mile. CASF has had a preference for last mile in the past.
- j. Connie also updated the group about legislation expected to be introduced next week by Senator Padilla (yes, of SB1161) that would allow for non-CPCN certified providers to apply for CASF funding. This legislation is critical for our communities and would allow some of the small providers or even school districts to apply for grants to provide last mile service.
- k. Jim supported this need by the example of Rancho Navarro: we have an interested provider but has been sitting on the project for nine months due to a lack of a CPCN. The CPCN requirement is really a barrier to entry.
- l. Connie will forward some information on to us, and would love to get some letters of support for this legislation. There are two processes happening parallel to each other: the legislation and a comment period on how it will be implemented.
- m. Senator Padilla has a mixed record, as he introduced CASF funding legislation and is the reason that we have funding, but he also introduced SB 1161. We need to recognize the positive accomplishments Senator Padilla has done for broadband.
- n. Jim thanked Connie for the update, and invited her to attend one of our Alliance meetings in person this year.
- o. Mike Nicholls asked about the ViaSat application for an \$11 million satellite project being sponsored by another regional consortium, because our collective experience with ViaSat and satellite in general has not been good; satellite also touches upon the digital divide issue (affordability).
- p. Connie will look into this, and maybe arrange a conference call; the comment period is until the end of March.

7. Community Foundation Challenge Grant

- a. We are close; we received a \$200 check today from Sparetime Supply in Willits, and are still waiting on the tobacco settlement money.

8. Doug McCorkle –North Coast Railroad Authority (NCRA)

- a. Doug provided an update of NCRA activities: the NCRA has signed a contract with Parallel Infrastructure, a private operator of cell towers that will develop towers along NCRA's rights of way north of Healdsburg (starting at mile marker 68.22) all the way to Eureka. They just build the tower and then lease them to wireless operators. Their clients, such as Verizon or ATT, provide all the equipment on the towers. Doug also provided a bit of history about Parallel Infrastructure (<http://parallelinfrastructure.com/>)
- b. Doug is here because in their agreement with Parallel Infrastructure they are to work with the Alliance, and Ed Myers (from Parallel Infrastructure) suggested he listen in on what we are doing.
- c. Mike asked about rights of way to abandoned rail beds in Sonoma County. Doug replied that right of way law is complex and with a lot of unique situations, and that you would have to look at the original documents, some of which go back to the 1800's and are hand written.
- d. Doug also said that there are Rail to Trails programs in Ukiah, Eureka, and Healdsburg.

9. Committee reports –none really

- a. The kick-off R1CP permitting meeting will be on March 27th.
- b. John Kuhry from EDFC announced that they are going to offer a direct public offering, and broadband projects such as the R1CP could be one of the offerings that people could invest money into.

10. Meeting Adjourned at 11:40.

Next meeting: February 22nd, March 8th, 15th, 22nd, 29th