

Steering Committee Meeting Notes

Friday, September 27th, 2013 10:00 am – 11:30 am

The Community Foundation of Mendocino County

204 S. Oak Street, Ukiah, CA 95482 (707) 468-9882

New Dial In Number

Dial In # (760) 569-7225, Participant Access Code: 108 1131#

1. Call to Order: 10:00 am

- a. Attendees: **Brian Churm** (Alliance Technology Chair), **Conrad Cox (retired Mendocino County Superior Court Judge)**, **Jim Moorehead** (Alliance Chairman), **John Kuhry** (Economic Development and Financing Corporation), **Mike Nicholls** (Access Sonoma Broadband Co-chair), **Trish Steel** (Alliance Administrative Coordinator),
- b. Call-in: **Mitch Drake** (CEO, Golden Bear Broadband), **Greg Jirak** (Alliance Strategic Chair), **Marsha Armstrong** (Supervisor, Siskiyou County), **Peter Pratt** (RuMBA ED), **Cathy Emerson** (UCCC Manager, Center Economic Development), **Randy MacDonald** (Public Safety Communications Committee/Alliance liaison), **John McCowen** (Mendocino County Supervisor)
- c. Changes to agenda: none

2. Broadband Coalition of Northern California Counties (BCNCC) - Trish

- a. The Coalition is collecting letters of support from throughout the sixteen northern counties for the statement, "Sub-standard broadband damages the regional economy."
- b. Currently, five Boards of Supervisors have written such letters of support: Mendocino, Sonoma, Tehama, Modoc, and Glenn. From Siskiyou County, Supervisor Armstrong and County Administrator Tom Odon have provided a support letter.
- c. The County Superintendent of Schools from Mendocino, Butte and Modoc counties have provided letters, and Shasta County ISP provider Andy Main has provided a letter.
- d. These counties (not including Marin) represent 66% of the population of the northern California counties.
- e. We have also been contacted by Peter Pratt in Marin County, who is the Executive Director of the Rural and Mobile Broadband Alliance (RuMBA). Peter is a 30 year veteran of the broadband business, and was recently asked by Marin Supervisor Steve Kinsey for recommendations for improvement in broadband service. Supervisor Kinsey represents the western side of the county, which is rural and underserved. Peter contacted the Alliance and we hope to develop a mutual working relationship.
- f. We need to spread the word and get more support letters, and ask anyone with contacts in these counties to help us in this regard. Trish has a support letter template to share, so contact her if you need it.
- g. The Coalition plans to ask the folks who wrote letters of support for Golden Bear Broadband to also write a letter of support for the Coalition.

3. Golden Bear Broadband (GBB) – Mitch Drake

- a. Mitch reported that not much has transpired since our last update. The CPUC staff had six questions for Mitch, and his responses to those questions were delivered back to them.
- b. He is also working with Connie Stewart, Redwood Coast Connect Consortium Manager, on the design of GBB as it goes through Humboldt and Trinity Counties to make sure that it meets their needs. They are changing a few routes, including moving off of route 36. He hopes to stay on the NCRA rights-of-way as much as he can.
- c. Mitch is looking for a legislator to champion the GBB project, and he recently had a good meeting with Senator Jim Nielson (<http://cssrc.us/web/4/biography.aspx>). Senator Nielson (R) represents the 4th Senate District, which covers a vast and predominantly rural area that encompasses 12 counties: Butte, Colusa, Del Norte, Glenn, Nevada, Placer, Shasta, Siskiyou, Sutter, Tehama, Trinity and Yuba Counties. Senate District 4 includes the most northern coastline in the state and follows the California-Oregon state line, then moves down the central portion of Northern California to just north of the greater Sacramento area.
- d. Senator Nielson understands that northern California constituents are not being adequately served and is increasingly concerned, and sees broadband as a viable means to which provide economic development opportunities.
- e. Senator Nielson would like to have a meeting with ATT also to find out what their objections are to the GBB for himself (ATT issued one of the seven challenges), and Mitch suggested that he should ask ATT if they plan to serve the north counties, and if so, “When”, and if not, “Why?”
- f. Another question for ATT would be why they are not taking advantage of CASF grant funds that are specifically for subsidizing rural broadband builds, and also why they are making it so difficult for other companies to do so.

4. Access Sonoma Broadband (ASB) – Mike Nicholls

- a. Mike Nicholls, co-chair of the newly formed ASB, provided an update on their group.
- b. They had a meeting this past Tuesday and covered a lot of ground. In attendance were some new folks from Joy Road and Occidental.
- c. Mike asked for suggestions on how to bring new people “up to speed” so that the course of the meeting is not disturbed going back to basic questions.
- d. Jim said that one thing the Alliance did that was helpful was to put a lot of generic educational content on our website, and then refer people to the website.
- e. The ASB has received the budget and go-ahead for their website, so he will follow up on this suggestion as they move forward with the site. The county is doing the initial work on their behalf, with Mike and Steve Sharpe advising on content.
- f. Greg mentioned the need for surveys of broadband service, and suggested using the website for this also. The Gold County Consortium pointed ASB to a site with a template for making surveys on Word Press.

5. Net Neutrality Tutorial – Brian Churm, Alliance Technology Chair



- a.
- b. Brian provided a 20-minute tutorial on the topic of “net-neutrality.” He said that there is a lot of confusion around the topic, and even deliberate obfuscation by people with agendas.
- c. The concept is actually simple, and that is to “treat everyone equally.” We’ve been living with it, and it has been quiet, but that may be changing depending on the outcome of various legal proceedings that are happening right now.
- d. According to Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Net_neutrality): Net neutrality (also network neutrality or Internet neutrality) is the principle that Internet service providers and governments should treat all data on the Internet equally, not discriminating or charging differentially by user, content, site, platform, application, type of attached equipment, and modes of communication.^{[1][2][3]} This website also lists the arguments from both proponents and opponents of net neutrality.
- e. The concept began back in the 1980’s when ATT had phone service to houses, and the start-up company MCI began providing cheaper long-distance service to customers.
- f. However, because MCI was a competitor to ATT, they were given much lower quality phone lines. MCI filed lawsuits against ATT saying that their calls should be treated exactly the same way as all calls, and they were successful in this approach.

- g. Now we are entering the digital age, and the rules that were developed for phone lines don't apply.
- h. Brian continued with a diagram using Comcast (but it could be any ISP). Comcast comes into your home as a single connection, or single "pipe." But inside that one pipe, there may be many flows happening at once: inside the home one person may be on a phone call, someone else watching TV or Netflix, kids surfing the web and on FaceBook, and someone doing email.
- i. All these are separate flows that are going through one main pipe. At your router there is a chip inside, and all this information that comes off of each device is sliced up into "packets" of information. These packets contain a tag that gives information about where things go, and gives a priority to them called "Quality of Service" (QoS). This is good, because you don't want your voice calls to have the same priority as your kids playing Nintendo. This QoS also helps networks prioritize all this info, taking into account many factors. A half second delay in video would be more problematic than a half-second delay in email, for example.
- j. All this information arrives at the "Comcast Cloud"; the cloud is a huge building ('server farm') that is similar to the New York Stock exchange, where all these networks come together, each in their own "cage". Everyone has their cage and connects to whomever they want to connect to.
- k. At the cloud, all this information is sorted, including using the QoS info. If the tag says that it's "voice", then it will continue on its way on a fast route.
- l. Now, Comcast has a bundled product called "Triple Play", which includes video, voice, and internet. They have a voice device connected to the Comcast Cloud with very good connections.
- m. Now imagine that you have a Vonage phone, so through your Comcast line your packets of information for your voice call are sent. Comcast has to send the information to Vonage. Does Comcast have to build the same level of quality connections to Vonage as they do to Comcast voice? Right now there is no regulation on it.
- n. Comcast has been sued, because they are not providing the same Quality of Service. In this example, instead of building a nice connection to Vonage, they force users to connect to a connection in Alabama, resulting in a terrible connection because of routing distance. There is no law that says Comcast has to build a perfect connection to Vonage.
- o. Another example is Netflix streaming. Netflix is located in San Jose, but is available all over world. Comcast has a "video on demand" service, and is building very good connections to their video on demand so customers will get great video streaming. However, they are only building one tiny connection to Netflix. If you want Netflix through Comcast, you will have a terrible connection. They don't want to build robust connectivity with Netflix because it competes with their "video on demand."
- p. You can trace the route that your ISP uses to connect your computer to a website (although you may not be able to decipher the city codes).
 - i. For PC, go to the command prompt, and type in "tracert" (without the quotes), then space, and then a web site. You should be able to see all the connections and the time it takes to reach each one.

- ii. For the Mac, find the command prompt in your system folder, type in traceroute (space) and then the website.
- q. Partnerships between different companies are evolving which will compete for your business. So for example, Google may partner with ATT, and Comcast with Bing, and the providers will build good connections to their partners and not to their competitors.
- r. The companies are saying “Let us do this” and let the market decide how it all plays out.
- s. Others say “No”, because it will squeeze the smaller companies out of the marketplace, and create monopolies. And since the monopolies don’t play well together, then if people are on different systems, their communications won’t go well either.
- t. This also has political implications as well.
- u. As another example, Rupert Murdoch, who has a specific political and philosophical viewpoint, buys an ISP Cloud, and makes a connection to Fox News because he owns it. He also owns the Wall Street Journal and makes a connection there. Meanwhile, Jeff Bezos who owns Amazon and the Washington Post, builds good connections to his Cloud. They are not building connections to “opposing” companies, or if they are, only poor quality connections.
- v. This results in differing quality or even information that their internet customer will receive, depending on who their ISP is and who they have formed partnerships with. If someone researches a specific topic, such as gun control, they may not be able to reach websites that carry the view opposite of the view of their ISP. This could result in issues becoming more polarizing as people only have access to one viewpoint.
- w. Right now, there is no law against this. By controlling the pipe, the ISP is also controlling a person’s internet experience. The carrier is controlling the content.
- x. Often people do not have a choice of carriers, such as in rural areas. In that case, you will be beholden to that provider, and their views and preferences.
- y. If people do have a choice, they probably can’t afford to subscribe to both so that they have to choose one, and again you will get that providers bias.
- z. This is happening now; the Comcast/Vonage battle has already occurred. You can find listings of how well Netflix works with various carriers. If there was net neutrality, that situation wouldn’t even exist as Netflix would perform exactly the same on all carriers.
- aa. Amazon and Google are in favor of net neutrality, and they have formed an Alliance saying that we need net neutrality. On the other side, Comcast, ATT, and other ISPs have formed an alliance saying that we don’t need net neutrality. Net neutrality is also a political issue, with proponents and opponents often divided along party lines.
- bb. Brian didn’t have any clear idea which way the current legal rulings might go when asked that question, as he said that there were big players on both sides. Things are being decided at the federal level, which would supersede state regulations. The market sorts some issues out, but when companies start controlling content as well as transport, then it becomes harder.
- cc. Supervisor Armstrong shared a story about being interviewed for a radio show, and the connection was so terrible that she literally had her hearing tested. She found out later that ATT was routing the call in some strange way that the quality degraded to the point that it was useless.

- dd. Conrad asked that if all content were treated equally, what points could transporters use that would make them competitive? Brian said that they could separate themselves out from their competitors on cost and technology, and that they could “use the carrot to lure customers in” rather than the stick to “smash competitors.”
- ee. Peter Pratt (Marin County) updated the group from what he knew of the issue: The FCC issued an open internet order in December of 2010, which came down on the side of net neutrality. The commission voted 3/2 along party lines. It was appealed, and *Verizon Vs FCC* is being heard in the Circuit Appeals Court in Washington. Everyone is waiting on this ruling, and in the meantime the FCC cannot enforce the ruling.
- ff. There are other bills that are trying to defund enforcement of the FCC order by defunding the FCC.
- gg. Brian also added that if the Alliance is endorsing projects which provide last mile service, we should ensure that those providers provide equal opportunity, or are net neutral.
- hh. Currently there is not any federal initiative on net neutrality on the FCC agenda, but there is a new FCC chairman, so there could be something on the 2014 agenda.
- ii. *There is a lot of information on the internet about net neutrality. The following information was not given at the meeting, but was found with a quick search and can provide more information and reading for those interested in learning more about net neutrality:*
 - i. *For the pros and cons of net neutrality from Wikipedia:*
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Net_neutrality
 - ii. Electronic Frontier Foundation:
<https://www.eff.org/search/site/net%20neutrality>
 - iii. *From an article today (9/27/13) about how a proposal to block net neutrality is one of the Republican demands in the debate of the Affordable Health Care Act in exchange for short-term funding to avoid a government shutdown.*
<http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2424935,00.asp>
 - iv. *For the 30-minute video, “The internet must go”:*
https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=Pp1MAMkIa6A
 - 1. For information about who produced the above video, see this link:
<http://www.theinternetmustgo.com/about/>
 - v. *For Steve Wozniak’s letter to the FCC in favor of net neutrality, see this link:*
<http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2010/12/steve-wozniak-to-the-fcc-keep-the-internet-free/68294/>

6. SB 740 (Padilla) – update

- a. SB740 is currently on Governor Brown’s desk for his signature. We encourage everyone to send him a letter and urge him to sign this bill.

7. MCOE CalTrans Transportation Planning Grant – “Bridging the Digital Divide in Mendocino County”

- a. At the meeting, Jim reported that we hadn’t heard anything yet.
- b. *Later that day, we heard from the Assistant Executive Director of the Mendocino Council of Governments that unfortunately the grant proposal was not funded. She also reported*

that none of their Environmental Justice (EJ) or Community Based Transportation Planning (CBTP) grants were approved by Caltrans for all of Caltrans District 1 (Lake, Mendocino, Humboldt & Del Norte counties).

8. Committee reports

- a. A few important upcoming meetings were announced:
 - i. Cathy Emerson announced that on **Oct 15th (Tuesday) there is a meeting in Redding with CPUC Commissioner Sandoval**. She wants Commissioner Sandoval to hear from folks how deficient broadband is seriously impeding economic development. Contact [Lollie DeYoung <LolliedeYoung@csuchico.edu>](mailto:LolliedeYoung@csuchico.edu) if you want to attend this meeting. Greg said that the Alliance will have a packet of information documenting this from the Coalition for Jim and Mike to take to the meeting.
 - ii. The Redwood Coast Connect **Annual Broadband Forum is on Oct 28th** in Fortuna. If you want more information email Trish and she will send you the invitation.
- b. John Kuhry, the ED for The Economic Development and Financing Corporation, announced that they recently received their designation as a “Community Development Financial Institution” (CDFI) from the US Department of the Treasury (see the attached press release); this is very exciting news as this certification allows EDFC access to access financial and technical award assistance from the DCFI fund through the CDFI program, bolstering EDFC’s ability to further its mission of “Connecting money and ideas with entrepreneurs to create sustainable prosperity in lake and Mendocino Counties.”

9. Meeting Adjourned at 11:25.

**Next meeting:
October 4th, 11th, 25th**