

Agenda Item VI.D

Improved Deployment Social or Cultural Considerations

The purpose of this suggested category is to draw the Council's attention to assumptions that often affect issues of deployment because they are unvoiced assumptions about what is or is not likely to happen related to telecommunications deployment. There is often a perception among telecommunications providers that rural areas and lower income urban areas are not likely to generate the demand necessary to justify providing service. This perception exists at all levels, where some of the largest providers consider markets as "small" as Portland too small or on the verge of being too small. For the truly small markets it is even more of a problem. Like all stereotypes, there is some truth to the matter, but there is more misunderstanding than truth with regard to most situations.

There are corresponding convictions about telecommunications on the other side of the spectrum. Users who do not have the telecommunications services they desire often assign unrealistic expectations to the prospect of telecommunications services. Advanced telecommunications services are coming to be a basic requirement for any major industrial or commercial enterprise, but the optimistic suggestion that all economic development problems will be solved if only there were more T-1 lines for a community is unrealistic because it overlooks other influences on economic development. In the same way, an assumption that telecommunications is only an economic development issue, having nothing to do with perceptions of quality of life and livability, is also probably based on an incomplete perception of the nature of demand for telecommunication services.

The Council's previous discussions have included an acknowledgement that a key to successful deployment will be working to overcome the unwritten, unexpressed assumptions that may be creating unreal expectations. The Council's evaluation of proposals could include a sharpened vision that tries to separate the unsubstantiated expectations or unsubstantiated assumptions from the Council's understanding of reality. The Council's evaluation of proposals could also include criteria related to how well or likely a proposal is to help improve understanding of the apparent realities of telecommunications in Oregon. This might include developing proposals that seek to address the misunderstandings about telecommunications.

Recommended Action:

Direct a subcommittee to review concepts and identify the most important educational opportunities to help overcome misunderstandings about telecommunications deployment.