

In early 2002 the Oregon telecommunications Coordinating Council conducted an online survey. Set forth nearly verbatim below are the survey responses received. Not all 32 respondents answered all the questions. Duplicate answers are not listed twice. The numbering does not indicate the order received.

Item 1 - Telecommunications opportunities and needs

What suggestions do you have for actions (e.g. ideas, projects, needs) that could benefit from "...coordinated statewide, regional and local telecommunication services, including providing services to unserved or underserved areas of the state" as well as "the manner in which telecommunication investments can be coordinated to facilitate partnerships between the public sector and the private sector and between state and local governments?"

1. Currently poor phone lines that slow the download of e-mail & no cable hook-up
2. DSL or alternative to areas beyond 1800 feet from switching center.
3. DSL going to local schools – everyone in those areas should be allowed to tie into the T1 line or whatever goes to the school
4. Financing Public-Private partnerships can be a challenge as public entities cannot guarantee debt in future years. The coordinating council should facilitate discussions between the private and public capital markets to find viable ways to facilitate public-private financing. If legislation is necessary, then make recommendations to the legislature.
5. Government must enable the provision of high-speed telecommunication services for remote and unserved areas. Private business is apparently reluctant to enable this connectivity because there is no profit margin.
6. Even if tax break incentives were offered to large private concerns, long-term service and support would be questionable, just as our telephone service does not provide a range of services equivalent to what is available for urban subscribers.
7. A partnership between federal/state government and local entities such as the Greater Applegate Community Development Corporation and perhaps including local libraries and/or community colleges is a more appropriate way to reach unserved areas.
8. Legislation that works, instead of destroying ISP providers. SB622 has been destructive to broadband futures.
9. Help rural areas have viable, reasonable connection options, speeds, and rates.
10. The analog connection rate is poor (avg. 24k) due to the "pair gain" technology common throughout my area.
11. Facilitate private wireless providers (e.g., broadband/microwave and/or satellite) for siting of towers and repeaters to reach "last mile" rural landowners for whom high-speed wire connections (i.e., fiber or cable) are economically unfeasible.
12. Support community-based (schools and libraries) utilization of internet centers for rural areas that could be accessed by community members during evening and non-school hours.
13. Pilot small community networks (e.g., 40 homes on Forest Creek Road, 31 homes on Missouri Flat, etc.) that would provide lower-cost access to more people.
14. A state agency like the old REA (Rural electrification Administration) charged with setting up broadband telecom services to rural areas.
15. Encourage the local electric cooperative to tap into the BPA substation and provide high speed internet serve to their customers
16. Put internet in local libraries.
17. Look into wireless internet. (many comments in support of wireless)
18. Two biggest problems in providing wireless high speed internet access to rural Oregon is 1) Access rules governing Federal land. 2) Lack of high speed backbones in some areas.

19. State investment in broadband should be directed to rural areas that will not be served by private companies. Using local groups, such as CDC's, in communities to manage these projects would be a start.
20. How about allowing more than one telephone company access to service area, open the ability for competitive rates etc.
21. As a condition of a phone company offering local service, it should first be required to offer expanded data services to its local service customers.
22. State funding is needed to "equal the playing field" and bring redundant broadband services to the South Coast.

Item 2 - Access to broadband telecommunications resources

What can we do to encourage broader distribution of telecommunications services (e.g., financial incentives to invest in rural and underserved areas)? How do we ensure that residential service offerings are available as well as commercial or government offerings?

1. Tax credits to stimulate broadband infrastructure development. The Oregon legislature should allow 'carry-forward' provisions in the law to allow the start-up entity to receive the benefit of the tax credit in later years when it makes a profit. For non-profits, the Oregon Legislature should allow the 'assignability' of the tax credit as a way of providing an incentive to the non-profit. Tax credits should be tiered and greater for sparser areas.
2. Financial incentives contingent upon including a certain percentage of residential services.
3. Communicating to the consumer that it exists, and is reliable.
4. Distribution of telecommunications services must be accompanied by some education and training so that residential users understand the full benefits of using internet resources.
5. Providing small grants to networks or cooperatives in rural communities might be one way to encourage broad distribution.
6. The situation in my community is poor because Qwest does not provide the necessary hardware and technology. They drive their business decisions more on the state of the economy rather than the dire need of rural areas for reliable internet connectivity.
7. People need to be educated on the demonstrable benefits of having Internet access to increase the pool of "buyers". Community-based workshops and access as described above can help in that effort.
8. Tax breaks are, of course, good incentives for private companies who expand to rural areas where profit margins are slim.
9. Promotions, cheap monthly fees.
10. State funded programs for rural and underserved locations, provide financial incentives to investors & telecommunication companies in rural and underserved areas.
11. Give local governments some resources to establish the foundation of technology. Each community will have slightly different needs and each community will have a much clearer picture of what they need.
12. Development of a network should be subsidized by revenue sharing among telecom providers.

Item 3 - Affordability

What is an appropriate definition of affordability? How do we address affordability as well as profitability while ensuring sustainability?

1. Have the public help pay for Gov't T1 lines so it is more affordable to the government and more affordable to public if no profit motive.

2. Need to communicate to the consumer that it exists, and is reliable and they may be willing to pay about 25/month for unlimited time on line. The service must be reliable, you must be able to get on line quickly and the connection must be stable.
3. Hard for folks who are already getting cable to swallow paying an exorbitant fee if this service is using the exact same line.
4. Rural and remote users should be able to pay a rate similar to that of urban users. This may mean that on-going government subsidy is necessary.
5. Small grants to support initial installation of equipment and connectivity might encourage the desired broader distribution.
6. Unless you are a mid- to large sized company, monthly DSL (and certainly satellite) rates are high. Given our current age of ecommerce, this seems unscrupulous.
7. Here is enough competition in the ISP marketplace that affordability needn't be an issue.
8. For low-income families, however, a grant-in-aid to assist with telecommunications service as part of a job-training program would be a real boost.
9. A low or no-interest loan program to cushion that \$500 to \$1500 initial cost of equipment and installation for broadband or satellite service for rural residents would boost the numbers of people willing to buy in.
10. Anywhere between \$30-\$45/mo. You could also have long-term contracts at a reduced rate overall.
11. A guaranteed ROI (return on investment) for private sector based on a Telecom Tax.
12. More than \$25 dollars a month is too much for residential service.
13. Staged pricing. Share cost of development, then once the system is developed, roll back rates to a fair return but not so much as might be needed during the development phase.

Item 4 - Public/Private Coordination

System developers are working to provide broadband access in Oregon. The most efficient use of public and private resources would suggest cooperation and coordination wherever possible. Public/private arrangements provide interesting possibilities and pose challenges. What do you see as the advantages and disadvantages of a closer public-private relationship?

1. Both groups have an interest in improving the service
2. It can get broadband access beyond the very limited areas to others
3. Financing
4. Less waste and redundancy - saves taxpayers and businesses money. A system would need to be developed, though, to be sure neither group bears an excessive amount of the burden.
5. The advantage of public-private cooperation is that resources can be shared, rather than duplicated, thus providing cost-savings, etc. The concern is that large bureaucratic organizations, public and private, have little understanding or ability to support the needs of rural users.
6. Perhaps the private sector would be willing to subsidize the initial infrastructure setup –but not too involved after that because of conflict of interest.
7. Specifications in numbers and timelines should be included in any "contract" between the government of the people and for-profit concerns.
8. Public-private partnerships could be used to provide financial and tax incentives to provide service where it is demonstrably not economically feasible without subsidy.
9. Government also has a role in helping private concerns determine and resolve siting issues. This can be done by providing access to GIS maps and GPS data and assistance in resolution of siting issues covering environmental concerns, other government agencies, etc.
10. Set goals and time frames & if the private sector doesn't step up to the plate do it publicly

11. Utilized shared resources.
12. Privates may extend service to areas otherwise not served with public support.
13. Public facilities such as the BPA fiber optic backbone are an essential element to making this work.
14. Public/private coordination could provide added service where the service provider won't do it. For instance, if the schools hooked up to T1 could sell off their extra service to other rural users, this would be advantageous to all.
15. The advantage of Public/Private collaboration is the ability to leverage funding, skill expertise, and knowledge expertise. Overall this should translate into lower customer cost and the creation of open access to e-commerce and global markets.

Item 5 - Usage/demand

Many areas experience low demand for broadband services. These low demand rates result in extremely difficult business cases from a sustainability point of view. How can we educate/excite businesses and residents to integrate the use of these services into their lives to not only build demand but to also improve business profitability and community quality of life?

1. Better access – less time spent in front of computer = better health and quality of life
2. It will work like a snowball...once people get broadband they cannot go back, and once it is available it will be more readily accepted.
3. Take the greedy telephone companies out of it
4. Broadband should be public resource provided at cost without the phone companies messing it up.
5. Education
6. You could work with the Chambers of Commerce to organize short seminars to introduce the concept to business owners.
7. Putting those internet pay-per-use kiosks (they have them in airports) in public waiting areas (bus and train stations) and other areas, even hospital and doctor's office lobbies, where folks tend to have to just sit and wait. if somebody had the opportunity to access it with minimal investment to see if they liked it, they may be more likely to try it. Need good instructions, though.
8. Education and training is vital to increase demand for services. Many local residents do not understand the benefit of doing business via the internet. This is another reason that partnerships with libraries and community colleges could benefit and sustain broader telecommunications usage.
9. Promoting to [rural residents] the benefits and convenience of on-line commerce to purchase supplies and equipment?
10. Partnerships with Chambers of Commerce and direct funding for their administration of a training/education program on how to integrate the use of these services into their lives
11. Take a look at what the Eastern Oregon Telecommunications Consortium has done.
12. Use Public Libraries as demonstration points and offer services there for people to try.