

**Testimony Prepared for the Joint Legislative Committee  
On Information Management and Technology  
January 20, 2004**

**An Overview from the Oregon Telecommunications Coordinating Council  
"Our Roadmap for the Future"**

Good morning, Chair Nelson and members of the Committee:

It is my pleasure to come before you today on behalf of the Oregon Telecommunications Coordinating Council (OTCC) to present you with the exit report for 2001-2003 and to discuss future plans with you. Chairman John Irwin was not able to join us today, but sends his regards.

We are in an exciting and eventful time in telecommunications. Faster and cheaper technology is being developed at a mind-boggling rate. We are moving away from our dependence on computers to telecommunicate, using instead the televisions in our homes and personal appliances that can be place in our pockets or our briefcases. The rapid deployment of wireless transport and its interconnectivity with existing fiber is changing our whole concept of service to rural and underserved areas.

The implications are staggering. We can now consider the real access to goods and services by people in their own communities and homes. For example, in healthcare, we are developing web-based platforms that allow home health nurses to visit patients in their homes – see them, check vital parameters, talk with care-givers and make recommendations for medication changes to their physicians. Instead of seeing 5 of 6 patients per day, the nurse can see 10 or 12. She is also alerted more quickly to a patient whose health is decompensating and can make changes to the healthcare plan or suggest an office visit and in many cases avoid hospitalization.

Another example involves the elderly citizen and his involvement in community life. Community portals are being developed that allow citizens to attend city or tribal council meetings, attend the Symphony, borrow books from the library, and schedule rides to and from appointments all from their homes.

A final example is one that allows communities to present themselves virtually to potential businesses and industries looking for a place to locate or relocate by offering information

packages that included video tours, GIS mapping and interviews with local officials before making and actual site visit.

This exciting landscape is not without its threats and challenges. The Universal Service funds at both the state and federal levels find themselves dwindling or being deliberately cut. The need for affordable last mile connections remains high and in many instances there is not a business case for private investment. Applications development is slow, and incentives need to be found to encourage their development. Education and technical assistance in the use of broadband services are not widely available thus keeping the demand low. There are not enough public/private partnerships being utilized to help solve many of the aforementioned challenges. Developing win-win partnerships is still difficult to achieve.

Researching these issues, and bringing the appropriate groups of people to the table to help address and even resolve some of the issues is the role of the Oregon Telecommunications Coordinating Council. To that end, I would like to offer some brief background information, review the accomplishments of the Council and finally address some of the issues the Council will be addressing during the remainder of this biennium.

### Background

In 1995, the Rural Oregon Telecommunications Consortium was formed by a small group of folks from rural areas who were interested in seeing telecommunications infrastructure deployed throughout the State for use in education, healthcare, e-commerce and e-government. The idea of a grass roots group to work on telecommunications policy, legislation and funding caught on quickly and other regional telecommunications consortia emerged – Central Oregon Telecommunications Consortium and Southwest Oregon Telecommunications and Technology Consortium. These organizations were committed to expanding infrastructure to their areas of the state. Two events gave added impetus to the growth of these consortia – the first state-wide telecommunications conference in 1995 and the subsequent formation of the Oregon Telecommunications Forum Council; and the first Rural Telecommunications Conference in 1996. These two events gave voice to the grass roots consortia and added impetus to their efforts. The passage of SB 622 in 1999 was a defining moment for these groups with the realization that they could influence the development of telecommunications in Oregon. The consortia also realized that their collective voices would be stronger and more influential than any single consortium, and the idea of creating the Oregon Telecommunications Coordinating Council was conceived. The 2001 legislature created the Council in law and provided limited support for the biennium. The Council was made up of representatives from each of the Consortia, counties,

cities, telecommunications providers, the Tribes, the Connecting Oregon Community Advisory Board and Oregon Health and Sciences University. Work was begun in December 2001.

### Accomplishments 2001 – 2003

1. The first of the Council's accomplishments was to open the door to all comers. Everyone was welcome at the Council, and the Council invited as many as wanted to be heard.
2. The Council made it easy to attend Council meetings by opening them to video conferencing.
3. The Council established a mission statement and a set of guidelines for achieving the mission. Both became part of HB 2577B and have thus become the guiding principles for consideration of telecommunications policy in the State.
4. The Council developed synergies around communities of interest - healthcare, education, economic development, public safety and government. As a result, a separate committee and a non-profit organization were formed to help support the development of telecommunications applications within their communities. The Telehealth Alliance of Oregon was formed in December of 2002 and has helped with the passage of HJR 4 which calls for reimbursement of telemedicine services and its implementation. The Education/Healthcare Committee was created by HB 2577BB based on a series of meetings held in cooperation with Sen. David Nelson and Rep. Monnes Anderson. The committee is administered by OTCC, its mission is to explore and make recommendations about how to best break down the infrastructure and application silos that exist in healthcare and education. One of the primary purposes in to improve healthcare workforce education and training.
5. The Public Safety committee developed HB 2304 which established a broadband policy addressing public safety needs of the state. This bill also passed and the Office of Emergency Management is now developing OARs for its implementation.
6. The Council also spent a significant amount of time exploring the need for and mechanisms for establishing public private partnerships for telecommunications development. This included a public forum on the issue. As a result, the Council was invited to submit a proposal to the Oregon Business Plan at its December 2003 Summit. The proposal, which is posted on the OTCC web site, is now under review.
7. The Council through HB 2577B has ensured that its work will continue through the end of the biennium. The Council has identified issues that still need to be addressed. It also identified additional stakeholders that need to be included on the Council in order to better address the remaining issues. The appointments should be completed soon and the Council plans to begin its work next month.

Issues to be addressed by the Expanded Council

I would ask that you refer to the Exit Report pages 26 – 28 for a list of the issues that need to be addressed. This is not meant to be a comprehensive list and other issues are already beginning to surface. Rather, it is meant to be a starting point. I will briefly discuss each with you today, but the Council is willing to provide more information on each and any new issues, in depth throughout the interim

It is our hope that we can provide you with information and to develop a working relationship with you so that we can develop needed legislation that will continue to further the development of telecommunications in Oregon.

In conclusion, the Council hopes that we can continue to serve the Legislature through the interim through this Committee. We are available to answer your questions and provide you with written information. Once our year's meeting schedule has been established we will provide it to you and welcome you to attend our meetings either in person or virtually.

Thank you again for the opportunity to serve you.

Respectfully Submitted,

Catherine S. Britain