

**Oregon Telecommunications Coordinating Council**  
**Minutes**  
**January 17, 2008**

**Attendees:**

Council Members: Link Shadley, Pam Berrian, Agnes Box, Cathy Britain, Faye Stewart, Ed Parker, Curt Pederson, Phil Barker representing Marlyn Schafer, Leif Hansen representing Michael Weidman, Paul Zastrow, Art Hill, and Doug Cooley.

Staff: Chris Tamarin of the Oregon Economic and Community Development Department and Eric Schmidt of the Association of Oregon Counties

Others: Ginny Lang and Ron Trullinger of Qwest, Jim Nelson of Embarq, Marsha Spellman of Converge Communications, Keith Grunberg of Charter Communications, and Lonny Macy of the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs.

**Old Business:**

Paul Zastrow moved that the November 29, 2007 minutes be approved as distributed. Curt Pederson seconded the motion. The Council approved the minutes.

**New Business:**

**Network Route Diversity and Redundancy – Lessons from the Coast**

Ed Parker recounted the severe storms that hit the Oregon coast in December 2007 and the extensive power and telecommunications outages that occurred. Ed reported that he and Onno Husing sit on a public safety communications committee for Lincoln County. Ed shared that he had been strongly promoting public-private partnerships and the use of private sector networks and services for public safety applications. Ed said that the lesson learned by the public safety community in Lincoln County was that separate network facilities are needed for emergency public safety communications. Based on this recent experience, officials believe that the county cannot rely on private sector facilities to work during disasters.

Ed asked what lessons had been learned by others from the event.

Ginny Lang of Qwest observed that the number one lesson to be learned by all is that Mother Nature is in charge. Regardless of how well we plan and build our systems, we can never be sure what will happen. Ginny reported that Qwest did very well with its customers for local calling access. Out of the 20,000 customers in the area, there were only 200 service calls directly related to the storm.

One constraint on the Qwest technicians was access to the damaged phone lines. Many times during the event, Qwest needed to wait for clearance from the power company before beginning repairs to be sure there were no high voltage electrical hazards. Ginny noted that Pacific Power and local public safety personnel worked with Qwest technicians to navigate through the storm damaged areas and that the coordination was very good. Qwest brought in personnel from Portland, Hermiston, Bend, Pendleton and Medford to restore its services. Many Central Offices were operating on battery and generator back-up power until commercial power was restored. The greatest impact of the storm on Qwest was four separate cuts in the fiber backbone serving the area. The damage to facilities from the storm and resulting landslides was amazing.

Ron Trullinger added that there was also a fiber break outside Salem at Mill Creek that affected service on the coast that compounded problems and impacted several of the independent telephone companies. Ron noted that the multiple breaks in the Qwest fiber were caused by massive mudslides. Speaking to Ed's opening remarks, Ron would be interested to hear about the County's or the State's assessment of what facilities could be put in place to survive this kind damage. The slides that occurred would have taken out any fiber facility buried or aerial. Ron reported that the northern side of the ring has been restored. The southern side of the ring still has not been restored to date. This damage is on a leased segment of fiber that runs along the Tillamook Railroad right-of-way. Large sections of this cable have been destroyed by mudslides. Fortunately the service provider has alternate routes from the coast, and Qwest is working with the provider to reconfigure the ring over alternate facility routes. The ring should be fully restored by mid-February. Ron reported that the satellite and terrestrial wireless networks that Qwest technicians used also had service problems during the event. Any service that used the ring for backhaul was isolated.

Ed asked if the Mill Creek fiber cut that caused service outages on the coast was a ring or point-to-point connection. Ron responded that it was point-to-point.

Jim Nelson of Embarq and Ron added that the loss of this cable at Mill Creek brought down the connection between switches on the coast and the Signaling System 7 database needed by switches to route calls. This resulted in the loss of Extended Area Service and long distance service on the coast. Embarq was able to maintain dial tone to its customers, but many were isolated. Service to 911 centers in Tillamook and Lincoln City, however, was not lost. Jim reported that the early warnings received from weather bureaus and local fishermen enabled Embarq to mobilize proactively and bring in generators, equipment and personnel in anticipation of the storm. This improved Embarq's ability to maintain and restore service.

Doug Cooley of Century Tel added that what used to be considered a hundred year storm now seems to be occurring every ten years. In Century Tel's assessment, there were no physical changes that could have been made to preclude the damage that was inflicted on the cables. Century Tel was able to maintain local dial tone for its customers, but lost long distance and DSL service for about thirty hours. Doug reported that Century Tel had the material and personnel to dispatch into the damaged areas behind the power

company to restore service. One lesson learned was that more generators are needed on site locally. Given this experience, Century Tel is also exploring available backbone network routes for additional redundancy.

Agnes Box commented that Southern Oregon experienced severe storms and service outages in the past that have resulted in the loss of life. She said that the thirty-hour outage restored without a loss of life sounds really good.

Ed added that another lesson learned is that the power companies can take some direction from what the telephone companies have been doing and establish route diversity to eliminate single points of failure exposure in their networks. Power companies also need to establish interconnectivity between their grids.

Ron observed that customers frequently think their phone service is out when the power goes out because many people now rely on AC power to operate their telephones. In fact, they still have phone service.

Cathy Britain commented that Providence was able provide medical services in Vernonia after Verizon, the local phone company, was able to turn up network connections into a tent.

Phil Barker from Gold Beach reported that there were multiple fiber breaks at the Coos – Curry County line which took down 911 Service for Brookings and Gold Beach. Edge Wireless service was also down given its reliance on the Verizon backbone.

Leif Hansen reported that LS Networks provides backhaul services from the coast and has very little distribution network on the coast. LSN is currently working on closing a ring between Tillamook and Lincoln City. Leif noted that LSN lost power at several locations and had to use generator back-up power. The fiber facilities on the Bonneville Power Administration power lines were not affected by the storm. Leif also observed that the size of self-healing rings also appears to be a factor in surviving these kinds of disaster events.

Keith Grunberg from Charter Communications reported that its facilities were severely impacted by the storm. Service was down for four days in some areas.

Ed noted that there is nothing like a big storm to point out your single points of failure and that he was out of service for three days at Gleneden Beach. We may not be able to prevent damage to cables and towers, but we can work to eliminate single points of failure with work-around plans and redundant facilities, and we must continue to learn from experience. Improving network reliability and disaster recovery planning is an ongoing process.

Ed thanked all the service providers for their efforts and participation.

## **Reports:**

### **Education Committee**

Curt Pederson reported that he has invited several educators to participate in the committee this year and is awaiting their replies. Paul Zastrow and Steve Nelson from the Department of Education will be serving on the committee. Curt is also the co-chair of a statewide Extension Ed committee for Oregon State University. He plans to incorporate the activities and participation of members of that group into the ORTCC Education Committee. Curt is interested in a wide representation, not just people from OSU.

Ed asked if the committee plans to look at the issue of state certification of online charter schools. Curt replied yes. Ed noted that an on-line charter school in Lincoln County began offering classes this term and that the majority of students registered had not been attending other schools. Ed sees these charter schools as a way of recovering students that have dropped out of the system.

Marsha Spellman recommended that the work of the Western Governors University [www.wgu.edu](http://www.wgu.edu) regarding online education issues and possible committee members be examined. Art Hill reported that he has heard that WGU has been very successful with enrollment growing at 200% per year. Art agreed that this would be a good resource.

### **Healthcare Committee**

Cathy Britain reported that the telemedicine reimbursement committee of the Telehealth Alliance of Oregon met yesterday to begin work on preparing a Bill for the 2009 Legislative Session. Additional committee members are being recruited. Benefit payers have been contacted and will be involved in the process. Reimbursement Bills from other states are being collected for reference. Updates will be provided at future ORTCC meetings, but there is also an e-mail listserv for those that would like to have more frequent updates. Cathy said to contact her to be added to the e-mail distribution list.

Cathy also reported the Oregon Health Network (OHN) Executive Committee is meeting weekly preparing for the FCC award to be approved by the Office of Management and Budget. OHN will be assigned a mentor from the Universal Service Fund Administrative Company for assistance through the process. Matching funds to cover administrative costs are currently being sought by OHN. Ed reported that the OHN Technology Committee is working on the development of a Request for Proposal for services that need to be contractually committed by June 30, 2008. Training sessions for Rural Health Care Pilot Program award recipients are planned for February. Two key elements of the RFP will be bandwidth and Quality of Service requirements.

Art Hill reported that OHN marketing materials are also being development to promote the project to healthcare users and service providers. Detailed information on the Oregon Health Network project may be found at [www.ortelehealth.org](http://www.ortelehealth.org).

Cathy also reported that the Telehealth Alliance of Oregon recently received 501(c)(3) designation as a non-profit corporation and that eight new members have recently joined the organization.

### **Infrastructure Committee**

Ed Parker noted that he is listed as the chair of the Infrastructure Committee in the agenda and that actually he is co-chair along with Michael Weidman. Infrastructure issues were discussed during the “Lessons from the Coast” segment of today’s meeting. Ed reported that he would like to see additional members on the Infrastructure Committee to take the lead on the study the state’s progress on network consolidation.

### **Legislative Committee**

Cathy Britain observed that an important issue to be considered for the 2009 Legislative Session is extending the life of ORTCC. Under current statutes, ORTCC will sunset on January 2, 2010. Statutory references are posted on the website under the “ORTCC Creation Law” tab. Cathy would like to have a discussion in the February meeting regarding the perceptions of ORTCC and the level on interest in extending the life of the council. Ed Parker added that he would also like to have a status from the Governor’s office on pending Council appointments before the February meeting. Marsha Spellman volunteered to serve on the Legislative Committee.

### **Public Safety Committee**

No Report

### **Economic Development Committee**

Art Hill reported that the Economic Development Committee plans to study three topic areas during 2008: telework, Oregon.gov website hosting, and the state use of videoconferencing. Art indicated that new public and private sector members for the committee will be recruited and asked for nominations. Regarding telework, Marsha asked if anyone had replaced Kathy King at the Department of Energy. Chris Tamarin responded that there is a telework project management position at the DOE, but it is currently vacant. Chris will follow up with DOE on its plans to staff that position. Chris reported that the City of Portland is also interested in telework-telecommuting issues and applications. Marsha added that the City of Portland recently completed a market research study that included statistics on fiber-to-the-premises and its impact on telework, traffic congestion, and other factors.

Regarding Oregon.gov website hosting, Ed reported that the state’s contract is currently with EDS and that the website resides on a server in Plano, Texas. Cathy Britain and Curt Pederson recommended some contacts at DAS as resources on this topic. Regarding videoconferencing, Chris Tamarin reported that the Association of Oregon Counties is currently examining its use by the counties. Cathy Britain recommended that the study be expanded to include “webinar” applications. Pam Berrian added that another videoconferencing application is to conduct employment interviews with distant candidates at lower costs. Pam said that the League of Oregon Cities might also be

interested in participating on this committee. Pam recommended that it would be useful to build a directory of available videoconference sites available in the state.

### **CoastNet**

Ed Parker reported that CoastNet is anxiously awaiting the interconnection of Lincoln City and Tillamook, which will provide them with route redundancy.

### **Fiber South / Regional Fiber Consortia**

Faye Stewart reported that for the past several months the consortia have been working to merge both entities under the Regional Fiber Consortium. They are awaiting action by five of the members to agree to the merger. Faye reported that the Consortia have agreed to lease fiber to Cottage Grove to connect the City Hall, Hospital, Schools, and a local wireless network. They are also negotiating fiber leases with carriers.

### **Other News:**

Curt Pederson reported that Lindsey Ball, the new CEO for the Oregon Wireless Interoperability Network recently made a presentation to the state CIO Council during which he expressed an interest in public and private sector partnerships and in serving healthcare and education applications on the network. Curt recommended that Lindsey be invited to meet with ORTCC.

Link Shadley reported that Wheeler and Sherman Counties are still largely without cellular service. He is working to attract cellular service providers to the area. Link is also exploring broadband service solutions for these counties.

Art Hill reported that the Eastern Oregon Telecommunications Consortium has plans to re-activate the group.

Marsha Spellman reported that free wireless broadband Internet access is now available at the Teepee Café on Route 26 in Warm Springs on route to Bend.

### **Public Input**

Marsha Spellman reported that public safety has been identified as a top issue on the agenda of the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Telecommunications Steering Committee. Lonny Macy is the chair of the committee. Marsha noted that only about thirty percent of the reservation currently has public safety communications coverage, and that coverage consists of a single radio channel that must be shared. The committee has been working on a strategic plan and on a project to establish four new radio tower sites. A \$140,000 planning grant has been received from the State of Oregon Emergency Management Department. The first new tower site to be developed will be on Miller Flat near Warm Springs. Lonny said that this is the first step in improving public safety coverage on the reservation and will also be used to improve cellular coverage. Marsha hopes that this project may also be integrated with OWIN. Additional funds are being sought.

**Meeting Schedule:**

The council will meet next on Thursday, February 28, 2008 in the Mt. Neahkahnie Conference Room, 1225 Ferry Street SE, Salem, Oregon 97301. Meeting information including the 2008 Schedule will be updated and posted on the Council website at [www.ortcc.org](http://www.ortcc.org).

\* \* \*