

Oregon Telecommunications Coordinating Council
Minutes
May 24, 2007

Attendees:

Council Members: John Irwin, Link Shadley, Pam Berrian, Cathy Britain, Rob Myers, Ed Parker, Curt Pederson, Brant Wolf, Michael Weidman, Onno Husing, Doug Cooley and Kim Hoffman.

Staff: Chris Tamarin of the Oregon Economic and Community Development Department

Others: Mike Zanon of the Oregon State Police, Phil Barker of Curry County, and Ian Hough and Jeff Burchett of Freewire Broadband.

Videoconference sites included Portland, Medford, Eugene, and Gleneden Beach.

Old Business:

Action Item

It was moved by Curt Pederson that the March 22, 2007 minutes be approved as distributed. Ed Parker seconded the motion. The Council approved the minutes. The Council did not meet in April.

Presentations:

John Irwin welcomed Phillip Barker, Director of Computer Services for **Curry County**. Phil Barker provided a presentation on the new public safety radio system microwave backbone network now being used to provide transport of data countywide to improve service reliability and reduce network costs. The network was implemented with previously unused channels on the existing wireless public safety network.

Phase-1 of the network implementation was in support of Assessor's GIS partnership with the Cities of Brookings, Gold Beach, Port Orford and the County Road Department.

Phase-2 will add outlying county sites. The network is expected to save money, improve transmission speeds and improve reliability. The system uses DS1's of a new Public Safety Microwave system that were not being used for voice channels. The same contractor that installed the new microwave radio system installed the data network.

Microwave Sites

Courthouse Jail
Grizzly Mountain (east of Gold Beach)
Cape Blanco (north of Port Orford)
Bosley Butte (near Brookings)
Black Mound (near Brookings)

The project reduces costs by eliminating leased data circuits. Phil indicated that the project is predicted to pay for itself within the first 3 years as lease contracts end.

Advantages of the new network include the county having “absolute control” of the entire system, with required changes implemented on the county’s schedule, not a service provider’s. Phil noted that additional capabilities can be added with flexibility and the county should not be directly affected by any upstream fiber cuts between Gold Beach and any other location.

Weaknesses of the new network are that the county must be self-reliant as it’s “our baby” and no one else’s problem if there’s a failure. Phil is working on a remaining challenge. He needs a solution to penetrate blocking terrain between Cape Blanco and the Port Orford City Hall. He indicated that a passive reflector or additional wireless hardware to complete that link may be used.

Phil reported that the project took two and a half years from conception to turn-up. Phil expects the network to pay for itself within three to five years. His largest expense going forward is personnel. Having the budget necessary to maintain needed staff is critical.

John Irwin made the observation that the Curry County system demonstrates that it is possible for non-emergency applications to share a public safety network. John asked about the public safety system. Phil responded that it is a P25 compliant conventional narrow-band system. John asked if the Oregon State Police was using the network. Phil responded no.

Onno Husing asked Curry County to put together a written description of the system and its applications. Link Shadley asked if the network is available for use by the public and if the county is acting as an Internet Service Provider. Phil said no, but he is open to suggestions and ideas. Link suggested that a revenue stream for the county could be created by opening the network to other users as paying customers. Doug Cooley noted that he would object to that type of plan. It uses tax dollars to build a public network that then competes with private sector service providers. Brant Wolf complemented Phil on a remarkable job building a network for a relatively low cost. John Irwin hoped that there will be more opportunities for Curry County to share their experience and insights gained through this project with others.

Contact Information:

Phil Barker
Director, Computer Services
Curry County
541 247-3372
BarkerP@co.curry.or.us

John Irwin welcomed Ian Haight and Jeff Burchett of **Freewire Broadband** www.freewirebroadband.com. Jeff provided an overview of Freewire Broadband; an Oregon company that is using fiber, WiMAX and fixed wireless technologies to provide carrier-grade telecommunications services such as Dedicated Internet access and Metro Ethernet Networking services. The goal of the company is to outperform incumbent carrier levels of customer service and compete head to head with local exchange company transport services.

Wireless is often marketed as a solution to use when landline services are not available. Freewire does not take that approach. Freewire relies on a very robust “Dual Ring Architecture” using both fiber and FCC-licensed microwave for its Metro Ethernet Backbones and wireless “Last Mile” facilities that are carrier grade. These technologies enable Freewire to be very responsive and rapidly install new service for its customers. Freewire owns and operates its own facilities, which enables it to effectively manage levels of service.

Freewire is focused on providing T-1 to 10 Mbps data service alternatives to business customers. Freewire can be a second service provider establishing redundancy and diversity to increase network reliability for the customers that don't normally have access to redundant path protected services.

The current coverage Area includes the Vancouver / Portland / Salem metro area as far east as Gresham and Troutdale and as far west as Forest Grove providing 10MB to 1GB Dedicated Internet Access and Metro Ethernet Networking services.

Phil Barker asked about network performance and latency. Jeff responded that their customer service level agreement is for 80 milliseconds, though recent testing on the network showed end-to-end network latency currently at 18 milliseconds.

Chris Tamarin asked about any expansion plans over the next one or two years. Ian responded that they are looking at Eugene and Bend as possible areas for expansion. The best prospects are the larger cities due to their network model. Jeff added that rural areas provide significant opportunity for wireless systems, but the economics of turning up networks in smaller rural towns requires seeking partners and anchor tenants.

Ian noted that Freewire is not a mesh provider and Jeff added that they are not participating in the “WiFi space.” Their market is in the licensed WiMAX space and in being a certified WiMAX provider. Onno Husing asked if this is a fixed WiMAX application? Ian responded yes, Freewire is a fixed WiMAX application provider.

John Irwin said that he had seen a quote from an executive at Cisco saying that WiMAX did not have a future as a backhaul network technology and asked for comments. Ian responded that he agrees. Freewire does not use WiMAX for backhaul, it uses licensed microwave and fiber. Freewire using WiMAX as a last mile edge network technology.

John thanked Ian and Jeff for their presentation.

Contact Information:

Jeff Burchett
Freewire Broadband
7327 SW Barnes Road #702
Portland, Oregon 97225
503 614-8282
jeffb@gofreewire.com

Council Business Reports:

Oregon Health Network:

Kim Hoffman reported that the Oregon Health Network application to the Federal Communications Commission Rural Healthcare Pilot Program was submitted to the FCC on Monday, May 7 in Washington DC. The OHN, if funded, will be a \$24 million project connecting hospitals, clinics, county public health offices, physicians, mental health, dental and optical clinics, and health education institutions across the state. Kim estimated that there is approximately \$55 million that will be awarded by the FCC in this round. It was reported that the FCC received seventy-eight applications for funding under the Pilot Program. Cathy Britain added her special thanks to Curt Pederson and Jon Dolan at Oregon State University for Jon's assistance in the development of the application. Additional information on the FCC program and the submitted application may be found at the Telehealth Alliance of Oregon website: www.ortelehealth.org.

Legislative Committee Report

Cathy Britain reported on the status of bills and resolutions tracked by the Legislative Committee.

SB 5508 – Oregon Economic and Community Development Department funding bill. Cathy noted concern about the status of funding for the OECDD Telecommunications Coordinator position. The position had been cut in the Ways and Means Committee co-Chairs budget. Cathy reported that issue has been raised with legislators and support for the position expressed. Cathy asked that people continue to express their concerns with their legislators. She thanked Pam Berrian for her efforts in generating awareness of the situation.

SB 136 - Establishes Oregon Wireless Interoperability Network Department. Transfers State Interoperability Executive Council and duties, functions and powers related to council from Office of Emergency Management to department. Establishes executive committee of council to direct activities of department. Cathy Britain reported that the joint committee on Emergency Preparedness and Ocean Policy passed SB 136 with –2 amendments out with “do pass” recommendation on to Ways and Means, which will add funding for planning in the State Police budget. It appears that Ways and Means will not fund the network itself, but fund continued planning. John Irwin observed that the OWIN project has been underway for many years and noted that he is extremely concerned.

This project directly affects people's lives. Delays in fixing what is a broken and soon to be failing system will have a disastrous effect. John noted that the Council fully supports the need to replace existing wireless public safety communications systems and establish interoperability. He is dismayed by the current status of the effort to do so. John noted some opportunities for improvement of the OWIN proposal

1. The current OWIN plan is a state agency top-down plan with a suggestion that counties and cities could buy access. The plan may have buy-in from some upper Willamette valley and southern Oregon counties in proximity to the I-5 corridor but appears not to address fully county and municipal public safety requirements in rural areas of the state. We should use one or more rural counties off the I-5 corridor as a model for building a plan from the bottom up and planning tower sites with both state and local needs in mind, and with real joint planning. John suggested that Lincoln and Curry Counties would be good prospects.
2. The current OWIN plan does not permit public-private partnership arrangements—which may be essential to making the economics work. Even if we could afford a state government only network, it would be harmful to economic development in rural areas of the state to remove a major potential anchor tenant customer for a general-purpose network. The current plan may have the unintended consequence of precluding private sector investment in the deployment of new multi-purpose wireless networks in rural Oregon.
3. The current OWIN plan is a voice-only network with a 9600 bit per second data add-on. That's the kind of data speed we had in the 1970s and is close to useless for 21st century broadband mobile public safety applications. We have an opportunity to move into a new age in public safety communications if we join forces with the private sector to produce a technical plan that will meet rural needs and support a full range of broadband public safety applications.

John presented the following draft ORTCC recommendations:

1. Rather than allocate more planning funds solely for State Interoperability Executive Council (SIEC), the legislature should earmark some of those funds for a joint planning effort and possible pilot or trial implementation in one or more rural counties that addresses these three opportunities. This approach would be more likely to result in a solution that will be supported by both state and local public safety organizations.
2. Apply the ORTCC “Guidelines for Transforming Public Safety Communications in Oregon” to drive development and evaluation of any public safety telecommunications plan. The guidelines and a thorough discussion of public safety telecommunications best practices are found in the “Report of the Oregon Telecommunications Coordinating Council”, November 28, 2006, <http://www.ortcc.org/PDF/ORTCCReportJLCIMT20063final.pdf>, pages 32 - 54.

Link Shadley proposed that Wasco County be added as a candidate along with Lincoln and Curry Counties in consideration for building a plan from the bottom up. Link added that there is currently an RFP out for a wireless network in The Dalles that would be expandable. He said that facilities support for a public safety network was included in that RFP.

Ed Parker reported that there was a meeting of the public safety community in Lincoln County on May 18th. He noted that, as reported in previous Council meetings, Lincoln County contracted with consultant RCC to assist in public safety network planning. Ed said that the tower sites recommended by RCC did not match well with the OWIN recommended sites. The Lincoln County group did not think the sites identified in the OWIN plan would work well for the county's needs, but that OWIN could co-locate on the existing county towers. Ed said that Lincoln County is ready to proceed with the recommended bottom-up approach. Onno Husing added that there was a lot of enthusiasm for moving ahead and he sees a strong spirit of cooperation within Lincoln County public safety community including the Lincoln County commissioners.

Mike Zanon indicated that he wants to be sure that everyone knows his contact information:

Mike Zanon
OWIN Program Director
Oregon Wireless Interoperability Network
P.O. Box 14360
3225 State Street
Salem, OR 97309-5074
503 378-3055 x 55037 (office)
503 798-8379 (mobile)
michael.zanon@state.or.us

Mike noted that he cannot attend meetings or participate in events that he does not know about. He said that he wants to engage in these discussions and participate in these meetings. He needs to be included. He asked that people please contact him. Last week, he was down in Coquille meeting with people from Coos and Curry Counties talking about these very issues.

In response to John's comments, Mike said that there has been limited "bandwidth" to explore these opportunities and partnerships, but he hopes there will be more resources available to do so this July through December. Mike said that the representation on the SIEC was intended to be inclusive and to provide for input from all levels of government around the state. He said that OWIN does support public-private partnerships and has partnerships in place today. He reiterated that the charge of SIEC is to consolidate the wireless networks of four state agencies. Mike noted that the 9600 bps data rate is a P25 specification, and OWIN is not intending that it should be its only requirement. He said

that the 700 MHz systems in the I5 corridor give much greater throughput than that today.

Mike asked for assistance in engaging in a wider range of exchange and to keep it manageable. There is interest in Central Oregon and on the Coast and other areas around the state. We need to start somewhere, but we can't start everywhere. He is open to input and is "all ears."

John Irwin said that one of the clear challenges is that there is only one Mike. There is a need for additional staffing on this project. Mike responded that budget requests have been made to increase staffing in the 2007-09 biennium.

Link Shadley expressed the concern that Oregon not build a new network with an old technology. He is concerned that many consultants seem have "blindness" on regarding new broadband technologies that can be used for public safety applications, or at least have blindness on regarding what they think they can sell to Sheriff's Departments and the State Police. Mike replied that this is where groups like ORTCC can help. Mike said to keep in mind that the conceptual design is a digital, trunked, IP based, land mobile radio system that is P25 compliant. He noted that he is interested in new technologies. He is interested in different proposals. When the network is ultimately put out to bid, he hopes that he will see a lot of bids proposing reliable proven solutions.

Curt Pederson asked about the guidelines issued last year by ORTCC? Mike responded that OWIN is in alignment with some of the guidelines but not all, for example, expanded cellular coverage. Mike said that it is not his mission to expand cellular coverage, however, he will engage in discussions with cellular service providers and share infrastructure for mutual benefit.

John noted that the ORTCC recommendations are a draft and asked the Council what it would like to do with them. Cathy Britain indicated that she is not yet ready to approve the recommendations as they currently stand.

Ed Parker observed that Mike Zanon is correct in the statement of his mission, and that he is following the directions of the legislature. Ed noted that the ORTCC recommendations should be more clearly directed to the legislature and less to SIEC.

Action Item

Link Shadley moved to approve the recommendations discussed in principle with the provision that they be further developed with a final draft to be distributed and approved by the Council via e-mail prior to the next Council meeting in June. Ed Parker seconded the motion. The Council approved the motion.

SB 137 – Authorizes Office of Emergency Management to site radio towers and related facilities needed for wireless interoperable public safety communications. Cathy reported that this bill will not receive any further hearings this legislative session, but may be addressed in the 2008 session.

SB 470-A – Establishes a grant program within OECDD for purpose of improving the capacity and accessibility of Oregon’s Internet exchanges and Internet web-hosting facilities for economic development. Cathy reported that the bill remains on the desks of the Ways and Means co-Chairs awaiting assignment. The committee will continue to watch for activity, but that looks doubtful. If it doesn’t get a hearing, the legislative committee will explore options to resubmit the bill in February 2008.

SJR 20 – Declares state policy to promote and facilitate activities by Oregon’s health care and education communities and their telecommunications providers to develop a network model that provides standards for interoperability and to establish peering point and peering agreements among health care and education networks. Encourages Oregon Telecommunications Coordinating Council Health-Education Committee to work with health care and education communities and telecommunications providers to develop telecommunications network model. SJR 20 was passed unanimously on the floor of both Houses, signed and submitted to the FCC along with the Oregon Health Network application.

SJR 19 – Declares state policy relating to Internet Protocol network. The resolution was passed out of the Senate Business, Transportation and Workforce Development Committee with a “do-pass” recommendation on April 24th. It was passed unanimously on the Senate floor on April 25th. It was passed out of the House Committee for Government Accountability and Information Technology on Tuesday with at “do pass” recommendation to the floor of the House. Representative Dallum will carry the bill.

SB 577 – Permits Economic and Community Development Department to expend moneys from Special Public Works Fund to provide matching funds for federal grants for telecommunications infrastructure projects. Cathy reported that this bill will not receive any further hearings this legislative session.

SB 519-A – Requires health insurers, and Department of Human Services through state medical assistance program, to cover services performed using telemedicine. Requires Director of Department of Consumer and Business Services and Director of Human Services to adopt rules. The bill was passed out of committee without recommendation and referred to Ways and Means on 05/04/07. It is estimated that the fiscal impact for the Oregon Health Plan may be as high as \$6 Million, which may mean that the bill will die in Ways and Means. The committee will continue to monitor the bill, and the Telehealth Alliance of Oregon will consider drafting a new bill with all parties involved to submit to the Legislature in February 2008.

SB 894 – Allows Public Utility Commission to adopt rules to conform universal service fund to federal law and related rules to extent that commission determines is appropriate. Cathy reported that this bill passed both Houses and is awaiting enrollment.

HB 2621 – Allows telecommunications utilities to elect deregulation. Specifies manner of making election. Imposes price caps on basic local exchange service and intrastate switched access for electing utility during three-year transition period. Imposes restrictions and price caps on extended area service during three-year transition period. Imposes requirements for primary line basic local exchange service. Authorizes Public Utility Commission to resolve complaints of customers of electing utilities. This bill received a lot of intense testimony for and against. It was referred to Elections, Ethics, and Rules without recommendation. Deregulation language in the bill has also appeared in an amendment to SB 982.

SB 982 – Provides definition of “telecommunications” and modifies definition of “telecommunications service” for purpose of laws governing regulation of telecommunications. This bill was passed out of the Senate (26 – 2) on 4/30/07. It was amended to include the deregulation portion of HB 2621. A hearing was held on May 21st and there was strong opposition to the amendments. A work session is scheduled for Wednesday, May 30th at 3:00 PM. At that time the committee will consider whether to pass the bill out as originally written, as amended, or not at all.

Doug Cooley observed that the amendment to SB 982 would give the last four controlled telecom companies Century Tel, Embarq, Qwest and Verizon pricing flexibility, not deregulation. The primary service line would still be regulated, price caps would be in effect, wholesale agreements would remain the same, and calling areas would remain the same. The bill would, however, enable telephone companies to develop marketing packages like Comcast and other competitors are able to do. Cathy acknowledging the differing viewpoints and noted that the committee will continue to monitor the bill.

Cathy Britain gave special thanks to all those who traveled to Salem to testify in legislative hearings and work sessions on behalf of ORTCC including Ed Parker, Michael Weidman, Jon Dolan, Kim Hoffman and to those who have helped with bill activities on our behalf including Jo Bell, Rob Myers, Andrea Fogue, Andi Easton, and Chris Tamarin.

Oregon Connections Telecommunications Conference:

Chris Tamarin reported that the 2007 Oregon Connections Telecommunications Conference is scheduled on Thursday & Friday, October 25 and 26, and will be held at the Best Western Agate Beach Inn in Newport. The 2007 conference website has been launched at www.oregonconnections.info. It is planned that there will be conference sessions on technology, applications, and regulation and public policy. The planning committee is looking for a keynote speaker and is working on the program. Chris invited any recommendations and ideas for sessions and speakers.

Open Seats:

John Irwin reported that he has been following-up on the appointment of Joe Franell as a Council member representing cities with the Governor's office. Cathy Britain reported that she has received a notice of interest from the North Coast Telecommunications Consortium about becoming active in ORTCC again. John expressed his frustration in the lack of progress in filling the seat representing the Oregon Tribes and asked for help. John reported that the Eastern Oregon Telecommunications Consortium appears to be inactive.

Fiber South / Regional Fiber Consortia

Pam Berrian reported that the Consortia have received proposals in response to an RFP and have been listening to presentations from three prospective service providers.

Gorge Teleconsortium

Link Shadley reported that Q-Life is running in the black and is expanding. A WiFi network RFP for The Dalles has been released and six companies attended the bidders conference. Link indicated that there are rumors of a new telecommunications service provider coming to the Gorge.

Industry Updates

Michael Weidman reported that LS Networks is now providing service in the Reedsport area - see details at <http://www.lsnetworks.net/newsslicks/2007/0522.pdf>. Michael also noted that LS Networks has increased its network capacity to an OC192 – 10 Gbps protected circuit through the Gorge to Eastern Oregon, that a new Point of Presence (PoP) has been established in Arlington bringing the total to forty in the state, and that another new node will be implemented in the next few weeks in Bandon to establish a PoP for improved service delivery on the South Coast.

Oregon Coastal Zone Management Association (OCZMA):

Onno Husing reported that he is continuing efforts to secure funding to continue his work on the Oregon Coast Telecommunications Economic Development Strategy.

Telehealth Alliance of Oregon (TAO)

Kim Hoffman reported that she and Cathy Britain will be delivering a three session training course on telemedicine via video teleconference for the Office of Rural Health. The first session will be on June 1st and will have nine video sites. The course is targeted for rural health service providers. TAO is working on getting a seat on the Board of the Northwest Regional Telemedicine Resource Center.

Other News:

John Irwin reported that he has been asked to organize a California Broadband Task Force Project to bring broadband to every rural community in four northern California counties. The project will be replicated throughout the state of California.

Meeting Schedule:

The next Council meeting will be on Thursday, June 28, 2007. ORTCC meeting dates currently scheduled for the rest of 2007 are July 26, August 23, September 27, October 24, and November 29. Meetings will be held in the Teleconference Room (Basement) of the Public Service Building, 255 Capitol Street NE, in Salem with the exception of the October meeting, which will be held in Newport. Meeting information will be updated and posted on the Council website at www.ortcc.org. John Irwin adjourned the meeting.

* * *