

Summary of Community Input for Interested Citizens at the Spring Lake Park High School Community Meeting 9/29/09

Question/Comment 1: What would need to happen for this project to move forward? What has to happen within county for a decision to be made? Could the County mandate services by providers?

Response 1: We are not sure what exactly we plan to do yet. We are in the process of conducting phone survey's with citizens in 3 areas of County and surveying businesses to look for input. One possibility is a central fiber ring connecting County buildings and businesses. Also we are talking to local providers to try to further this initiative.

Question/Comment 2: Comment from Nowthen Resident: We have approximately 60 houses in our development that lack access to high-speed internet. Qwest has been nonresponsive to repeated requests for service. Qwest provides service to communities in all directions (i.e.; St. Francis, Zimmerman & Elk River), Nowthen is a dead zone in the grid. We are in Nowthen and we can see the house ¼ of a mile away that has DSL but we can't get it.

Response 2: This can be a problem with existing infrastructure. Distance can also be a major factor.

Question/Comment 3 from Chamber of Commerce Member: Who would be business winners and losers in providing a high-speed internet alternative?

Response 3: Small to medium-sized business would be chief beneficiary of broadband development. No service losers; competition works to improve service and reduce price. If you got an additional provider in the area, usually medium to small business could benefit. In communities where a 3rd provider comes in (especially a non-profit or municipality) costs can go down. Monticello is the only new local city with a 3rd part provider.

Question/Comment 4: Comment from a local computer businessman: Agreed with previous moderator comments. Receives phone calls with problems. There is a quality of service issue. Security is an issue, can't protect good security with Dial-up. Cost is important. Even had issues in Blaine. It takes 2 kb to get a virus but 2 mb to download virus protection.

Question/Comment 5: Additional comment: Qwest said that it would cost \$40k to run cable (DSL Services) to homes in Nowthen.

Question/Comment 6: Additional comment from Citizen: We have a petition from our whole neighborhood asking for this (Broadband).

Question/Comment 7: Comment from local businessman: ClearWire engaging in build-out in metro areas. What you're looking for is coming, without current impediments. Services will be available if County can get fiber build out. Other things are also going on. For example; Sprint/ClearWire is starting to build out in major cities. New standards coming out to share services. Good that County is trying to bring Broadband to the entire county. Moderator is correct, at some point there won't be phone or cell phone co's – it's all broadband. Clearwater and Sprint are in the process of negotiating the 1st multi-billion mobil Wi-Max ring in the County. There will be one open standard someday. It may not make sense to complain to Qwest – it's coming soon either way. Public entities may not be the answer. One of my companies is working on a test Wi-Max in St. Louis Park without government or public funding. So what we are looking for is coming, and I think it is great that Anoka County is doing this.

Response 7: Extra capacity in an open network fiber could allow room for multiple solutions to problem.

Question/Comment 8: Local business person: Has customers near Radisson Road in Blaine...in Fridley (Comcast would charge \$13k) ... where DSL isn't even available. Dial-up is only solution in some parts of County; these customers can't even download virus protection software. 120k service through CLEC provider for some folks near Blaine airport (Radisson Road). T-1 is only other option but would cost \$400 - \$500 per month. Has a customer one block from Comcast that would have to pay 13k for DSL. Also works for a Senior

Center and they have dial-up. He can't support customers on dial-up. This group of individuals is located near the airport on Radisson Road in Blaine. Their only option is a T1 line at \$400 - \$500 month.

Question/Comment 9: Elaboration on structure of network? Who would manage it? What would it look?

Response 9: Anoka County is not sure what its model might look like. Some counties have done such things as: do nothing; create an initiative to create fiber backbone connecting municipal buildings, schools, etc; fiber ring around county that includes spare fiber that can be leased by county to raise revenue and provide service alternative to various parts of county (such additional service may not be provided by private partners). Scott County is using this model, bringing it to City/County buildings, hospitals & libraries. Lake County is also thinking of trying to build fiber & then looking for a manager / partner to run that.

Question/Comment 10: Any possible solutions coming from state level?

Response 10: This is the impetus behind the Broadband Task Force. State of MN is not planning to apply for ARRA funding. Some states are apply for stimulus funding for that but the State of MN is not doing this as far as we know. When a state, county, or municipality own and operate your own infrastructure the taxpayers are the beneficiaries.

Question/Comment 11: Pricing structure is out of hand. Charging surcharge (\$15.00) if not getting all services from provider. Creating digital divide.

Question/Comment 12: From Blaine resident: Computer Network Engineer, owns a wireless network company ... pricing is a big concern ... his sister lacks access due to affordability concerns ... public / private ISPs can offer service at much more competitive rates ... wireless options could address some needs in communities such as Nowthen ... conducted wireless survey of City of Andover & determined that City lacks infrastructure (like much of northern portion of County that only has dial-up or satellite service). Broadband service to rural Anoka County would rely upon wireless in short term. Not sure if it's possible to make it up to East Bethel or Oak Grove. Price Points (\$29.99 / mo with ClearWire, two-year contract; Comcast at \$25 / month with slower speeds, but not available in all parts of county). DSL wasn't fast enough for his own business. Fiber backbone is necessary for any type of deliver, at one point or another. Time and money well spent for county...fiber will never be obsolete...fiber to the home would be cost-prohibitive...there are other opportunities even if County fails to receive ARRA funds. Some cities make it difficult for broadband development...road construction projects are good opportunities for installation of fiber. Time and money well spent to look at fiber. If not able to get stimulus money, could still assist Broadband providers (permits, right of way issues). Should get interduct in ground with any road project.

Question/Comment 13: Comment from Citizen: Return of investment is high to connect municipal buildings. Don't do just half. Fiber is better for level of service.

Question/Comment 14: County might want to look at Chaska model...guarantee \$25 / mo for basic internet connect, higher rate for increased speed & service...

Question/Comment 15: Local business representative: Will backbone benefit wireless?

Response 15: The County should have all interests in mind. County to look at public/private partnership. Couldn't do home business without broadband. Long-term maintenance costs often off-set short-term savings.

Question/Comment 16: Local business representative: Anoka County United economic development group...organizations that this group represents have a difficult time telling Comcast or Qwest how to operate businesses. However, Anoka County should have the best interest of the County in mind & thus would make for an inviting partner to improve broadband service...

Question/Comment 17: How will Anoka County weather the storm from Comcast & Qwest?

Response 17: Comcast & Qwest typically will only offer services over infrastructure they install, own & operate...usually opposed to a model that is owned by county or municipality. We are inviting all providers to the table and will have an open RFP process.

Question/Comment 18: Would like to see change from status quo.

Question/Comment 19: Local Businessman: Don't count on ARRA funds...Comcast has quite a few partners that have fiber...Jaguar Communications...don't worry about cable or phone companies...County has the right idea...We should not count on Stimulus funds to do this. Don't think money will be there. Qwest has several partners such as Mid-Com Media in Bloomington, Jaguar communications.

Response 19: Not counting on ARRA funds...wants to hear from more citizens...

Question/Comment 20: Local resident: How can we help?

Response 20: Post your comments to the website. Encourage your neighbors to do the same. Organize community comments groups. What it will take to achieve goals: input need; money; find the right provider. Community will and political will can make things happen, very important to achieving goals.

Summary of Community Input for Interested Citizens at the Anoka City Hall Community Meeting 10/1/09

Question/Comment 1: Any other examples in MN or other states?

Response 1: Few states, but South Dakota made an investment for state educational services. Office of Enterprise Technology leases lines from private providers and makes them available to schools, municipalities. Iowa has a history of public electricity cooperatives, invested in copper infrastructure in the past.

Question/Comment 2: Oak Grove Resident: Challenge – No trouble with internet. Has triple play, and has spotty phone service. Uses Comcast.

Response 2: Comcast provides voice service through voice-over-internet protocol (VOIP). Comcast has not been providing voice service for very long, its approach requires triple play service over same system. Report experience to Public Utilities Commission (PUC) & Attorney General's office

Question/Comment 3: Anoka resident: Rather than availability, please consider optimization. Fiber to every home is not practical; cable is capable of handling a lot of data. Switching mechanisms currently used may not be up to par. Makes sense to invest in a fiber backbone, but it may not make sense to provide fiber to the premise. Can we better articulate expectations to optimize current infrastructure? Advocate, not just availability, to look at optimizing. May be possible to engage existing cable infrastructure to optimize – may require upgrading routing infrastructure. Get Fiber background is good goal – especially to institutions. Set expectations to existing cable companies. Another approach is to give economic incentive. Do they have to tear up roads to lay fiber – felt better if that is not the case? Why can't we control (or learn about) the fiber service from the incumbents?

Response 3: Since cable systems are completely proprietary, cable providers are beyond the scope of the PUC and its regulatory reach. It's very difficult to get incumbent providers to use their private networks in one form or fashion. There are small providers out there that are very interested. There is nothing like competition to get businesses to do what we would like them to do.

Question/Comment 4: Anoka County resident: Is the goal to take fiber to the home?

Response 4: Not sure yet. We're still in an information-gathering stage.

Question/Comment 5: City of Columbus – Only service through ISDN. Now get DSL through cable. Still not about to get service through Qwest. Economic Development Committee, with goal to bring businesses to area, asked business owners what they would like to see – mentioned struggle (and cost) to getting service. (Cited Ziegler, Race Track, & Gander Mountain). For the city, to improve service has been unaffordable. Have looked at different options for this city and have not found any. Hard to run a businesses without good access. Residential lot size may be a problem for improved access.

Question/Comment 6: Can get access through US Cable now, but up until two years ago had to rely upon DSL. Columbus Township economic development committee would like to bring high-speed internet to business district near I-35W and I-35W merger. Not able to afford investment in high-speed internet access on Comcast terms (\$30k + take-rate guarantee). No internet or cable in some areas of township.

Question/Comment 7: What about data over power line?

Response 7: Iowa and Rochester have done trials. Some potential, but not as viable in US due to electrical grid. There are also problems with infrastructure. Some potential, but not as rapidly advanced in U.S. as compared to Europe. Harder climb in U.S. due to differences in electrical grid. Problems with radio interference, transformers can create issues. Companies in Pennsylvania and Ohio, as well as parts of Texas, are experimenting with BPL on a small scale.

**Summary of Community Input for Interested Citizens at the
Ham Lake City Hall Community Meeting 10/8/09**

Question/Comment 1: Local Resident – Would like to see some choice in providers in the area.

Question/Comment 2: During Introductions:

- **Nowthen Residents – need assistance with getting better connectivity for businesses, residents and home-based businesses.**
- **City of Blaine – Want to see us make advancement in Broadband**
- **Library Director – Broadband is critical to residents and the libraries.**
- **Local IT Consultant – know there are advantages for Broadband to the County.**
- **Columbia Heights Schools – interested in getting connected to other public entities and making Broadband more cost effective.**

Question/Comment 3: Resident with home based business: Dial-up is only option today (or AT&T aircard). Would like to see option to have improved Broadband access. Currently experiencing many disconnects and spotty service. Would like to have better service to be able to work from home. Some other small businesses down the road would make use of the service as well. Qwest has said that there is little chance for expansion. Comcast is also not in the area.

Response 3: Lack of service can affect economic development, education and medical services in the community. Fiber can also be more reliable to wireless.

Question/Comment 4: City of Blaine: Studying topic and a cheerleader for Fiber. Current Vendors are basing service on possibility for profit which affects ability for residents to get service and the extension of infrastructure. Difficult to rely on vendors to provide service. Need to get base service infrastructure installed and then allow providers to compete.

Question/Comment 5: Local Businessman: Since Japan is so advanced, has there been research done on what they have done?

Response 5: Yes, in part their success is due to partnership between government and business (providers). Japan is only one case, but it's also true in other European countries. In Sweden, the government built a backbone, with providers utilizing the service and in some cases communities provide the service themselves. Fiber can be as important as delivering electricity to the home as in the past.

Question/Comment 6: It seems like it would make sense for the government to step in and build a backbone.

Question/Comment 7: At last meeting in Spring Lake Park, problem wouldn't be building backbone, but getting Fiber to the home. It may not be feasible to do Fiber to the home project, so we need to figure out how to get it to the home.

Response 7: Decisions have not yet been made on the exact scope of the project.

Question/Comment 8: Perhaps there are two phases. Eventually Fiber to the home will be required, but perhaps that is later phase. For example, future TV requirements may require Fiber. But short term solution maybe to get at least some coverage to homes that don't have it.

Question/Comment 9: Why do I have Fiber outside my house and not in my house?

Response 9: May require additional investment in electronics by the provider.

Question/Comment 10: The other problem is that price is based on per megabit. If we continue this way, consumers are not willing to pay for very high speeds so providers have no incentive to increase speed.

Question/Comment 11: Library perspective: With lower economy, residents are using libraries at greater rate since they can't afford service at home. Our libraries in various areas of the county (e.g., Coon Rapids) also have problems getting service.

Question/Comment 12: There is a myth what is economically feasible. Qwest has no Fiber to the home anywhere, but some small towns in MN have Fiber projects through other providers. These projects have common theme of having community involvement and leadership.

Response 12: We have talked to a provider that looked at 20 years investment in the smaller areas. From a community perspective, this is often looked at as long term investment, but it still needs to be cost-effective.

Question/Comment 13: Columbia Heights Schools: Have service and use Comcast to transport and it can be costly. Have looked at collaboration with others and hope that it would be cost effective.

Response 13: Other counties have done collaboration and there are models to look at.

Question/Comment 14: Looking at short term, have we talked to Clearwire?

Response 14: At one of our meetings, we thought we heard that it may be in our area soon.

Question/Comment 15: Concern that providers charge too high and may be a problem for some consumers.

Question/Comment 16: With open access model where government build infrastructure and lease to providers, it is less likely for new sites. Providers have funding to bring law suits.

Response 16: Another view is looking at the economics of open access. It has been shown to work.

Question/Comment 17: Look at open access models. They usually work best where there is a committed provider when it is developed and not wait for service to show up.

Question/Comment 18: Are there examples where multiple providers provide service?

Response 18: Not clear that has worked. Have to look at all options.

Question/Comment 19: Thoughts/Advice:

- **Create competition**
- **Let small business be able to compete**
- **Look at open access model**
- **Figure out funding and payback**