

March 20, 2009

Broadband Policy Recommendations for NTIA, FCC and USDA ARRA Stimulus Funding

Respectfully submitted by representatives and broadband advocates in North Central Oregon including the City of The Dalles, City of Maupin, Wasco County and the Columbia Gorge region.

1. The 'Digital Divide' is not an easily defined boundary. Rural areas are a mix of small communities that may have one DSL provider with inadequate bandwidth (underserved) and surrounding residences and businesses that have no access to broadband (unserved). Broadband projects must benefit a large geographic area and include a county wide or region wide effort to bring adequate bandwidth at affordable costs to all citizens, businesses and organizations.
2. Broadband access must be available to everyone within a region. All students in a school district need broadband access to enable successful web based programs and resources. All patients of a health care district or clinic, all citizens within a local government and public safety service area, all customers of a business and all members of an organization need access to broadband for that entity to utilize technology to reduce costs, improve service, foster citizen participation and stimulate economic activity.
3. Broadband service should be provided by at least two competitors in an ideal world. Economics of rural areas may dictate a single provider and infrastructure technology. That infrastructure must be content neutral, ubiquitous, symmetrical, 2 megabits per second minimum with capability for future expansion and be under local control either through the grant funding stream or franchising.
4. Projects must be sustainable into the future, not a onetime capital infusion for infrastructure that is then allowed to deteriorate. Sustainability can come from affordable user fees or continued public support similar to the high cost fund historically used for utilities.
5. Wireless technologies are preferred for their low cost and capability of rapid deployment in rural areas. Access points can be powered by solar and wind technologies to greatly reduce the infrastructure capital expense and avoid disruption to the environment.
6. Municipal, cooperative and community fiber networks must be supported and encouraged to expand through policies and funding. Attempts by large utilities to outlaw local fiber networks should be prohibited.
7. Radio frequency spectrum should be made available immediately and policies adopted to ensure low or no cost license allocation to small local entities to avoid monopolization by large companies. Current policies allowing wide geographic area licenses to be purchased for billions of dollars has limited broadband deployment and locked out many local projects that are shovel ready.

Contact: Link Shadley link@shadley.info 541.591.0128