

# **Public Service Commission Broadband Advisory Group**

**Tuesday, August 26, 2014 1:00pm**

Flambeau River Room  
PSC Building 610 N. Whitney Way  
Madison, WI

## **Minutes**

### **Introduction of the Participants and Opening Discussion**

The meeting began with each member giving a short introduction and opening comments. Several members stressed that broadband was driven by a “convergence of needs”; and the importance of bringing connectivity to schools, office parks and rural areas. Several members stressed the importance of broadband to economic development, while others discussed more specialized and nuanced needs, such as the ways in which broadband is reforming education, the impact of broadband on rural health care and on the FirstNet public safety network initiative. Several members noted that increased broadband availability in the Northwoods meant seasonal visitors could and would stay longer, providing millions of dollars in to the local economy. The members also agreed that the question of broadband availability was more nuanced than just a yes/no question: it also included issues of price and adequate speed to meet users’ needs.

### **Statements of Problem**

During the discussion, members repeatedly noted that technological change is happening rapidly and continually, and provided examples such as the change to an all IP network. New innovations are occurring every week. Several members noted that video is driving high bandwidth demand. Members also noted that libraries are still a main point of access to broadband for many communities, and libraries need bandwidth. Broadband enabled schools are dismantling the old education paradigm, but this change requires ever more bandwidth. Members also noted that adoption is important to all sectors.

Several members noted the difficulty of getting broadband to areas where the population density is not sufficient to support the costs of the necessary infrastructure. Some members believed that public-private partnerships were necessary to surmount this problem, others noted that taxpayer funding of networks could negatively impact the ability of providers to compete.



## Discussion of the Playbook

Dr. Chattopadhyay, State Broadband Director, provided an update on the Wisconsin Broadband Playbook. Of the 12 “plays” in the Playbook the majority of the plays were ongoing and some needed more active outreach. The two plays that needed input from the Advisory Group were Play 2 and 3. Implementation of these plays (exploring tax incentives and right-of-way issues) would be discussed in future work groups set up by the State Broadband Office. The members discussed the Playbook. The consensus view was that the Playbook was well done, but that it was dated and may need updating. However, the members also agreed that parts of it were working, and it was time to bring it to life.

The members also agreed on some principals for implementing playbook. The goals of the Playbook needed to be realistic and actionable. They needed to reflect changing technology, and the solutions needed to be “future proofed” if at all possible.

During the discussion, members requested general information on the tools available through the state broadband office (See Appendix A). One member also requested an update on the progress of the regional broadband planning teams.

## Action Items

Members made a number of recommendations for possible action items. The group discussed these, but did not formally adopt or recommend any action items at this time. The action items discussed included:

- The state is developing a portal to show areas that are ready for business and/or manufacturing. Broadband availability should be taken into consideration while evaluating business readiness.
- Members recommended supporting the “Telecommuter Ready” community certification concept.
- Legislative changes could be in budget bill, but there is always opportunity to introduce changes during regular legislative sessions. Any barriers to investment in this critical infrastructure should be communicated to legislators and the Governor’s office.
- Need to catalog “what’s available, what’s present, what can be used, what strings are attached.” Maps need to be accurate, with up to date information.
- One participant recommended reforming state and federal USF programs first, to target incentives to end users instead of providers.
- Some members recommended “shot clocks” on DNR approvals for actions like tower siting.
- Whitepaper on incentives to develop infrastructure.



## Right of Way Discussion

At various times during the meeting, the members discussed problems with access to rights of way, and the impact this has on infrastructure deployment. One member noted that Google is concentrating on building its Gigabit Cities in areas where access to right of way is easy to obtain. Members recommended examining the costs and fees required to access rights of way, as well as restrictions and hurdles. One member raised the delay caused by feasibility studies in obtaining access to DNR towers as an example. Another noted the cost of relocating facilities during road construction. The general consensus was that examination rights of way access is a future priority.

## Future Actions

The members agreed to create work groups to address specific issues and recommendations after the close out of the federal grant. Dr. Chattopadhyay will facilitate formation of those workgroups. One of those projects would include drafting one or more white papers on some of the issues discussed above. Besides creating work groups the State Broadband office will also work with different stakeholder within the state to improve its data collection and mapping efforts.

## Appendix A

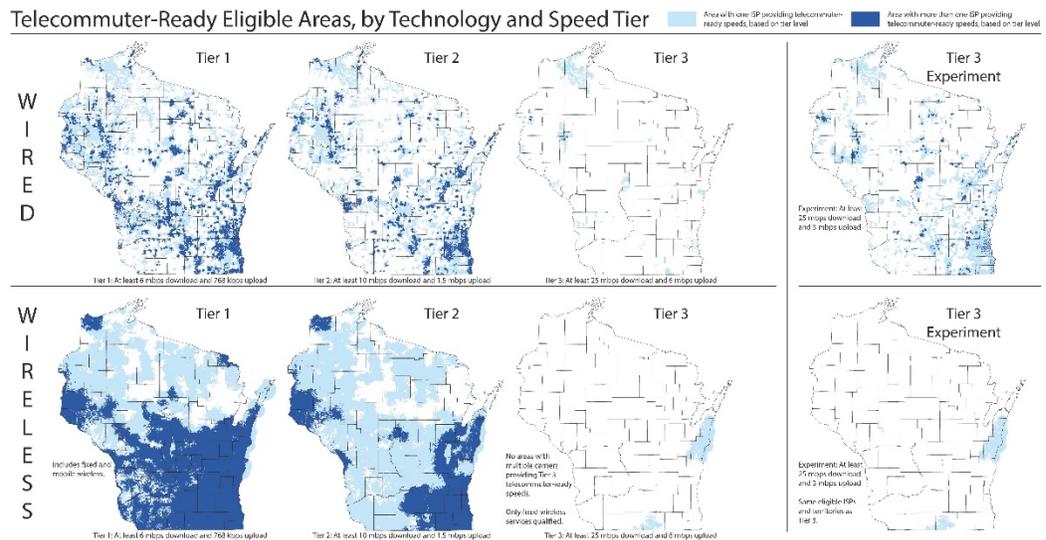
### 1. Transparent Data

- a. Key Assets: Database of State Assets
  - i. Wisconsin Broadband Map: (<http://wi.linkamericadata.org/>) Displays advertised broadband coverage across the state, including available speeds and provider types.
  - ii. Broadband Expansion Grant: Annual grant program authorized by the PSC to improve access in underserved areas. Areas believed to be eligible were mapped by PSC staff and can be seen as a layer on the Wisconsin Broadband Map. Grant Program Link: <http://psc.wi.gov/utilityInfo/tele/broadband/grants/bbGrantApplicationPage.htm>
  - iii. Mobile Broadband Coverage Validation: Since September 2013, the PSC has been deploying a smart phone app to run regular mobile broadband connectivity tests, collecting about 200,000 tests over that time. Preliminary result maps: [http://www.link.wisconsin.gov/lwi/images/Mobile\\_Pulse\\_Poster\\_07022014\\_FIN\\_AL2.jpg](http://www.link.wisconsin.gov/lwi/images/Mobile_Pulse_Poster_07022014_FIN_AL2.jpg)



b. Availability Data

- i. Importance of Continued Data Collection: The broadband coverage data on the Wisconsin Broadband Map is a result of voluntary data collection with providers through the NTIA. To continue and improve on current maps, collection needs to continue and possibly refined to the address level.
- ii. Telecommuter Ready Communities & Gigabit Business Park: A potential program to certify communities as “Telecommuter Ready”, PSC coverage map data would be used to determine which communities have nearly comprehensive access to sufficient broadband for telecommuting. A sample of potential telecommuter ready areas is shown below.



- iii. Community Anchor Institutions Data: +5,000 places of local importance in the state that are surveyed for broadband subscription information. PSC is looking to partner with the Department of Public Instruction to streamline and improve surveying participation.

- c. Demand Data: Bandwidth Assessment Tool (BAT): Establishing a “Broadband Marketplace”, the BAT is a means for citizens to estimate and communicate their broadband needs to providers. Potential consumers fill out the survey (located at: <https://apps.costquest.com/bat/home>) while providers can evaluate data and contact willing consumers (located at: <https://apps.costquest.com/pp/wi>). Additionally, the PSC opened a Broadband Demand Survey in 2013, which is available for analysis through the PSC.



- d. Best Practices and Streamlined Processes: Building effective partnerships is key. A success story for this is the collaboration between the DNR, DOT, and PSC to map all of the radio towers that each agency own and consider the possibility to add further communications infrastructure to them. (map located at: [http://www.link.wisconsin.gov/lwi/link.aspx?URL=docs/Wisconsin%20 State Tower Maps final.pdf&Title=Map%20of%20Wisconsin%20State%20Towers](http://www.link.wisconsin.gov/lwi/link.aspx?URL=docs/Wisconsin%20State%20Tower%20Maps%20final.pdf&Title=Map%20of%20Wisconsin%20State%20Towers))

