

**Wisconsin State Plan Steering Committee Notes**  
**March 12, 2012**  
**Days Inn, Portage WI**

ATTENDANCE

Steering Committee

Greg Flogstad, Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission  
Chris Straight, West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission  
Cliff Grand, Ashland Area Development Corporation  
Joe Hegge, Grow North Regional Economic Development Corporation  
Bob Bocher, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction  
Chet Strebe, Northcentral Technical College  
Tom Jackson, Office of Senator Dale Schultz - Wisconsin Legislature  
Joe Brickweg, Veolia Environmental Services North America

PSC/LinkWisconsin

Brian Rybarik  
Chris Larson  
Jeff Richter  
Bill Gillis

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Public Service Commission is facilitating the creation of a State Broadband Investment Plan as a part of its work plan commitment funded through the NTIA State broadband mapping, planning and capacity building grant. This plan is an opportunity to bring together provider stakeholders and a larger group of stakeholders to address key policies in the state that are important to advancing broadband. Key audiences for the plan include legislators and the governor's office. If we can bring stakeholders together around policy ideas it can make a difference. This Steering Committee will provide the guidance for developing the plan.

REGIONAL UPDATES

Joe Brickweg—Provider panels were organized in both Region 4 and Region 9 in which Joe has participated. In both of these meetings, there was a mismatch between the provider and the local consumer perspective. While providers emphasized broadband infrastructure is widely deployed as evidenced by the LinkWISCONSIN map, many consumers attending the public meetings in each region reported they do not have service or if they have service, that service is not adequate to meet their needs.

Tom Jackson--Region 7 is just getting organized after that Region's public meeting and completing the plan. Priorities for Region 7 include creating forums for face-to-face meetings with providers; Outreach to seniors and other community members via libraries as well as outreach to farmers and agri-business. A grant has been received for library outreach.

Chet Strebe- In region 4 there was a listening session between consumers and providers. He agrees with Joe's comments regarding outcomes of those sessions. In the Wausau area they are making progress working with the UW Extension in forming a Community Area Network.

Bob Bocher- The plan for Region 8 notes the mixed availability of broadband within the region, especially the gaps in more rural areas. Providers engaged as a part of the Region 8 meeting indicate business case is the key to build out. Bob suggests the need to incent providers. A local team has been formed in Columbia County to focus on gaps in that area of Region 8.

Joe Hegge --- There are only 116,000 people in five counties in Region 2, not many people per square mile. Lots of second homes not reflected in Census. The team is in the process of identifying the 47 percent who are second homeowners and surveying them. The goal is to prove there is a better market than recognized and outreach to encourage people to spend more time in the region.

Cliff Grand—Also notes providers are saying not cost effective to build to the less densely populated areas. There are examples of companies in Region 1 that are building fiber out to some very isolated areas. However, in the same area there is not mobile access. Local providers are looking for cooperation from area communities in tower siting. Health care in the region is an emphasis with regard to the need for better connectivity.

Chris Straight - West Central WI emphasizing anchor institutions. Last inventory, about a third of industrial parks did not have fiber in the ground. The second component is a community tool kit, related to comprehensive plan. The group has met twice and decided to focus on a pilot area with the objective of creating a business case for investment.

Greg Flogstad—Funding is limited. Trying to point out the benefits of broadband. An educational process is needed. For example, CenturyLink has a program that would give discounted computers to low-income customers, but that has not taken off. People do not understand the benefit. Region 6 has a focus on high demand underserved areas. Next meeting will bring in a resource from universities to talk about how broadband can help healthcare.

Region 5—Chris Larson notes they are setting up countywide teams. Looking at gaps in demand.

## OVERVIEW OF PLAN

Several slides were presented (attached with these notes) that provide an overview of the state plan process.

## STEERING COMMITTEE ROLES, EXPECTATIONS AND TIMELINE

Chris Larson reviewed Steering Committee roles and expectations (tasks and timeline attached). It was noted that the Committee would meet at least three times (the remaining two likely will be virtual). The next meeting will be in early May to review the draft plan. The plan must be finalized by the end of June.

## BRAINSTORM EXAMPLES OF STATE INITIATIVES

The following are representative of comments received on examples handed out at the meeting (attached with these notes)

### Create Incentives

Right-of-way and permitting issues are a significant issue, especially for tower sites. There is also a relationship to federal spectrum availability. An additional barrier for wireless is the availability of fiber to the tower for back-haul.

Discussion of notification and sharing when trenches are open. If there is better cooperation not only among providers, but also among governmental entities or authorities that open trenches to make open trenches or conduit available to others that could benefit...it can help reduce costs. It was noted another major player that has right-of-way and facilities are electric utilities.

Much discussion of opportunities to better leverage both federal and state funds. For example, preparing Wisconsin to be successful in taking advantage of the new Connect America Fund. Making sure hospitals and medical networks in the state are aware of universal service funds that are available to support telehealth and telemedicine networks. It is suggested that the PSC should be monitoring these opportunities and facilitating awareness in the state.

Recognize that unserved areas of the state should be the highest priority for any new incentives. Past initiatives have not always recognized these least served areas of the state as the first priority.

### Expand Community Capacity

It was noted that this initiative should be careful to be clear that expanding community capacity is not primarily an initiative about public deployment of broadband infrastructure. Progress can be made by focusing on the educational, information sharing and personnel support that helps local areas be successful in

coordinating and advancing awareness and cooperation to make broadband deployment and use successful. The Three Lakes example is a good example to cite. Also the Town of Ontario example.

Community leadership would benefit from information about what works. Stories can be powerful. It was noted that stories should be inclusive of rural, urban and suburban.

Most of the Regional Plans recognize the need for a paid part time position to help keep the regional actions and strategies moving forward. At present, the regional initiatives must rely on volunteers, which can be difficult for the longer term.

### Resource Sharing

Main points covered above.

### Digital Literacy

This may not be something that needs to be seen as an initiative by itself, but an important component to both the creating of incentives and community capacity initiatives. It was noted that there are funds as well and public and private partnership opportunities available through the FCC Digital Literacy Initiative.

### Business Utilization

Very important application of broadband, but the barrier is availability and awareness that is covered in other initiative examples.

### Health Care

Federal funds available but many eligible hospitals not taking advantage. A lot of federal money goes unspent.

### Define Targets

Targets should be recognized in the plan but with more of a general goal statement rather than trying to define a specific speed that should be required for the state.

## OUTLINE FOR STATE PLAN (FRAMEWORK)

The discussion also produced an outline for the state plan. The following is suggested as a starting point.

## Opening Set-up

The opening set-up should succinctly make the case for why broadband is important for WI and convey a sense of urgency (priority). It should relate broadband to the accomplishment of what is important for the state in economic development, health care, education, safety and strong communities. Important to convey both economic and quality of life benefits. Sections that may be included in the plan set-up are:

**Stories of Success** ---Stories can provide powerful motivation. Stories should include rural, urban and suburban examples to be inclusive of the state's many perspectives.

**Where WI Presently Stands** – Briefly review the data on where the current gaps in broadband are today and where improvements are most needed.

**Why Action is Important** – Provide clarity as to how broadband is important not only for the economy but for quality of life and opportunity in the state. Include statements with regard to the risk of not taking action.

## Initiatives

The bulk of the plan will focus on initiatives that can advance broadband availability, adoption and application in the state. The Steering Committee recommends the plan be built around four initiatives

**Create broadband provider incentives to invest in Wisconsin.** This initiative will focus policy ideas that improve the incentive to deploy broadband, especially to the unserved areas of the state. It is recognized that incentives may also be important to expand broadband service capabilities to higher levels in areas where service is presently available as well. This initiative is closely related to the next two initiatives: “Reduce barriers” and “leveraging federal/state dollars”. The concept of provider incentives needs to also recognize affordability of the service deployed.

**Reduce barriers to broadband investment.** This initiative will focus on opportunities to reduce barriers/cost of broadband investment through mechanisms such as rules or incentives that promote notification and sharing of facilities and open trenches. May include topics such as more streamlined approaches to permitting and Right-of-way.

**Leveraging Federal and State dollars.** This initiative focuses on preparing Wisconsin to take the fullest advantage of federal dollars as well as effectively purposing existing state program dollars to accomplish the State's broadband goals and objectives. These opportunities range from FCC universal service funds to digital literacy funds.

**Education, Awareness and Personnel to support capacity of Wisconsin's communities in broadband development** – Many state-level initiatives to advance broadband must be executed at a local level. This initiative will cite actions that support leadership at the local level with information on best practices, identify matching funds to help support paid positions to advocate and coordinate collaborative initiatives; encourage public access, training and awareness at libraries and other locations.

## DISCUSSION OF STAKEHOLDERS

Steering Committee members brainstormed stakeholders to be included in outreach for the development of the state plan. A list will be compiled on an excel spreadsheet. The PSCW will fill in as much information as possible and share with the Steering Committee members to add additional. Target for completing the stakeholder list is March 23, 2012.

## FOCUS GROUPS

Focus groups including a dozen to 15 people representative of key stakeholder categories will be organized and implemented during the month of April. The focus groups will specifically provide feedback as needed to more fully develop state initiatives and actions to be included within the Wisconsin Broadband Investment Plan. Approximately five focus groups will be conducted. The first will be a face-to-face forum with broadband providers invited as the primary audience. In addition four virtual focus groups will be implemented. Dates and times of the four focus groups will be distributed to all identified stakeholders with an opportunity to sign up for the time most convenient. Up to 15 people can be accommodated for each focus group.

## STAKEHOLDER REVIEW

Following completion of the focus groups, the PSCW and LinkWISCONSIN staff will draft the initial plan with a focus on defining initiatives and actions that have wide support among stakeholders. An initial outline of the draft plan is noted above. The Draft plan will be reviewed by Steering Committee first and then brought to a wider group of stakeholders for review after including Steering Committee edits and additions. Specifically, the PSC on-line public comment tools will be used to post the draft document and record comments. The Steering Committee will be requested to assist with outreach encouraging Regional Teams and others to make comment. The PSCW will consider other public comment opportunities as appropriate for the success of the plan.

## NEXT STEPS

The following are next steps:

- By March 21 the Steering Committee will receive a rough draft description of major initiatives that will serve as a starting point for the state plan and a list of stakeholders with a request to add information to the stakeholder list.
- A schedule for Focus Group outreach opportunities will be developed and announced by April 2<sup>nd</sup>. Invitations to participate in focus groups will follow. The focus group sessions will be audio recorded with those recordings made available for review by Steering Committee members.
- A status update conference call with the Steering Committee will be scheduled for mid April. Look for a doodle-scheduling request in your e-mail.
- The PSCW and LinkWISCONSIN staff will complete a draft of the initial plan by early May. Look for a second doodle-scheduling request for a more extended Steering Committee meeting in early May to review this initial draft.