

FLATHEAD COUNTY BROADBAND WORKSHOP

BROADBAND PROVIDER PANEL

6-13-18

Charter Communications – Spectrum (Mary Roeher)

- Charter has a hybrid coax-fiber network.
- The company is investing in wireless networks
- Residential customers can get 100 mbps (download). They are planning on launching 1 gigabit service to residential.
- They want to work with communities and have discussions on broadband. They will share maps with the communities as part of the community planning process.
- When doing problem identification, they recommend asking three questions 1) What is the problem? 2) For whom? 3) Where?
- Digital Divide – They have a program called Spectrum Assist. \$14.95 a month for seniors on Social Security Supplemental income and students on the school lunch program. They receive 30 mbps Download/4 mbps upload service. There is an opportunity for school districts to promote this.

MontanaSky (Richard Dasen)

- Providing Internet in the valley since 1994
- They have a variety of services including, wireless point-to-point , leased DSL, hybrid Coax, FTTH
- Fiber to Missoula, Bigfork, Libby
- Network center
- They have recently deployed several new towers. They plan on installing three more towers and will cover entire valley with wireless service.
- Concentrate on rural service areas
- They do not have access to funding that other providers have
- The fixed wireless they provide requires line of sight. Terrain and winter weather are challenges.
- They rely on partnerships with other providers and communities to get things done.

CenturyLink (Teresa Holman)

- CenturyLink has 476 miles of fiber in the county and have 100 miles of fiber in the last 2-years
- They have extended DSL service
- Not everyone has redundancy. They do have fiber rings in the county but there are some spurs. There was a fiber break in Whitefish last week.
- More redundancy equals more cost
- Most schools have fiber but there are two schools that are remotely located that do not have fiber
- The cost for fiber is \$5 per lineal foot for aerial and \$10 per lineal foot for underground
- They can access the Connect Across America Fund
- There are some areas in the county where they have “exhausted” service and can not add new customers. If someone else cancels service at an address, another customer will get the service. They are making improvements to increase capacity and this should address this issue.
- They have made some improvements in the Ashley Lake area.

Blackfoot Communications (Dave Martin)

- There is decreasing access to federal funds.
- Residential areas do not generate as much revenue as businesses so this makes them harder to serve.
- Blackfoot does not have a presence in Flathead County but have worked on community projects in Montana and other states.
- Sandpoint, ID had an open access network but it failed because it included residential areas that could not be economically served
- Missoula conducted a study for an open access network that also had a residential component but it stalled for other reasons as well.
- Bozeman has an open access network. It does not serve the residential areas and has some limitation on what providers can do.
- Idaho Falls built their own network and leases dark fiber to providers that works well. It does not have a residential component.
- Blackfoot leases copper lines from CenturyLink. Providers often partner together.

Velocity LTE (Tyler Ament)

- They are providing fixed wireless 4G networks
- Focusing on difficult to serve residential market. They extend the fiber network through wireless service. Providing services in Batavia, Columbia Falls, Lake Blaine, Creston, Haskill Basin
- They need to use the backbone network of providers. This requires a redundant network. If Charter service goes out, their service goes out.
- Leverage the public and the private networks to provide last mile service.
- Each tower with their equipment requires fiber and electricity to each tower.

Bullitt Communications

- They initially started in 1993 as a pager company
- They provide VOIP service
- They buy bandwidth from two different providers for redundancy
- Serve both business and residential
- Issues with service providers and the industry include:
 - Tech support
 - Lack of transparency