

MAIN STREET MONTANA PROJECT

A BUSINESS PLAN *For Montana by Montanans*

October 15th Interconnectivity and Telecommunications Meeting Minutes
Morrison-Maierle, 1 Engineering Pl, Helena MT 59602
10:00 A.M.- 2:30 P.M.
Prepared by Michaela Wolfinger and Mary Craigle

Co-Chairs

Bill Squire, Blackfoot Telecommunications Group, Missoula
Rob Ferris, Vision Net, Great Falls

KIN Members Present

Chris Warden, Washington Companies, Missoula
Darryl Rensmon, Morrison-Maierle, Helena
Paul Roble, Stockman Bank, Miles City
Chris Fulton, Charter Communications, Billings
Paul De Wolfe, Access Consulting, Missoula

Participated by phone

Joe Sullivan, Montana Sky, Kalispell
Judy Preston, Ronan Telephone, Polson
Thelma McCloskly Armstrong, Billings Clinic, Billings
Erin Lutts, Mid-Rivers Communications, Circle

Staff/Public

Jim Molloy, Governor's Office
Dan Lloyd, Governor's Office of Economic Development
Michaela Wolfinger, Montana Department of Commerce
Dustin de Yong, Montana Department of Commerce
Joe Ramler, Montana Department of Commerce
Leslie Zolman, Montana Department of Commerce
Janice Wannebo, Montana Department of Commerce

Meeting started at 10AM with introductions from the Co-Chairs

Presentations

At 10:15, presentation by the Montana Department of Commerce. Dustin de Yong gave brief background on Research and Analysis Bureau. He presented several maps that the Bureau has created and discussed the potential of adding the Montana Broadband data. The group looked at the Utah broadband map and discussed its merits. Chris Warden offered feedback on the Utah map indicating too complex for consumers. The group discussed the need for a map that provided the needed information but protected competitive information of the providers.

Dan Lloyd gave an update on Education Superhighway. They are in the process of collecting data from the school districts.

Mary Craige gave presentation on the highlights and status of the Main Street Montana Project.

Dan Lloyd gave the KIN an overview of the Choose MT campaign and the business portal.

Recommendation: Broadband Map

Create map that has:

- Location of assets
- Capacity
- “Workable” disclosure agreement
- Private-Public projects allow for review by providers and appropriately targeted.
- Clear definitions
- Includes a “challenge” process
- Incentives to provide partnerships
- Broadband advisory “team”/Working Group

Economic Benefits:

- Streamline siting of business
- Direct better decision making by businesses on funding, expansion, need
- Enhance Montana business growth

Recommendation for a 2017 Bill that provides funding for Broadband Infrastructure

- Include incentives for public /private solutions to do the “right type” of development, sharing of assets, promotes future growth
- Defines underserved, matching open bidding, other requirements and ways to evaluate need
- Allows for different project funding mechanisms

Economic Benefits

- Improves connectivity for Montana consumers
- Incentivizes business growth

Recommendation: HB 2 funding that creates a Broadband Advisory Working Group with funding for the purpose of:

- Oversee legislative grant/loan of 2017 broadband infrastructure legislation
- Oversee development of a Broadband map and provide oversight to ensure accurate, appropriate, and reliable data
- Serve as a Communication hub/public relations/education
- Partner with state agencies on community infrastructure development that includes broadband
- Serve as a point of coordination of federal money
- Conduct research into best practices and methods including assessing rural needs, actual speeds, expansion of services, public relations messaging
- Determine needed programs and legislation
- Designed in such a way to keep industry partners engaged.

Economic Benefits

- Make better, advised development decisions (both private and public)
- Increase efficiency for funding coordination; including federal money.

Recommendation: Change State and Local Broadband Permitting

- Institute maximum time of 30 days for permitting
- Eliminate fees (state)

Economic Benefit

- Provides Montana connectivity quicker
- Increases profitability for companies