

To: Friends of West Next Generation Network
From: William Sederburg
Re: Update on West Next Generation Network (WNGN)

The past few weeks have seen considerable progress and little progress simultaneously. Here is why I say that.

Progress Point #1: Public Hearings

Our four municipalities (Hendersonville, Biltmore Forest, Laurel Park and Fletcher) hosted broadband hearings on Dec. 4 & 5 to introduce RiverStreet to their communities. The turnout exceeded my expectations. Erica Anderson counted 97 people in attendance in Laurel Park. I estimated over 100 attended the Hendersonville meeting, 60 people in Fletcher, and 20 in Biltmore Forest. Thanks to Alison Alexander, Jonathan Kanipe, John Connet and Mark Biberdorf for their good work! (Yea for City Managers)



Laurel Park Hearing Dec. 5 - Eric Cramer Speaking

Here is a link to an article in Gov. Tech magazine about the forum in Fletcher. http://www.govtech.com/network/North-Carolina-Communities-Draw-Up-Internet-Service-Wishlist.html?mc_cid=f5de6c145c HYPERLINK "http://www.govtech.com/network/North-Carolina-Communities-Draw-Up-Internet-Service-Wishlist.html?mc_cid=f5de6c145c&mc_eid=0a7a738ebb"& HYPERLINK "http://www.govtech.com/network/North-Carolina-Communities-Draw-Up-Internet-Service-Wishlist.html?mc_cid=f5de6c145c&mc_eid=0a7a738ebb"

I reached three conclusions from the hearings. First, there is considerable interest and support for better broadband service. Second, people are excited to assist RiverStreet to determine if there is a viable market for them to serve. Third, Morris Broadband is responding to the potential threat posed by RiverStreet by announcing upgrades to their system. There was also concern expressed about the service provided by Morris Broadband. Charter participated in Fletcher, and AT&T did not participate.

The next steps will be for RiverStreet and the municipalities to (a) “roll out” a marketing campaign to assess initial interest and (b) finance feasibility studies developing more specific plans for potential expansion. RiverStreet CEO Eric Cramer made it clear that the process will take some time. It will be at least two years before services might be available to the initial recipients and longer for others as the project is phased in. The next steps are critical to the success of this project and I believe are likely to be more politically difficult than the hearing process.

We continue to make good progress in bringing RiverStreet to the area. The entire project became more real to me as citizens spoke up to express their needs and RiverStreet responded with how they wish to proceed. It also highlighted the heightened competition with existing providers as RiverStreet considers moving into an area served primarily by Morris Broadband.

Progress Point #2: UNCA Study

Stagg Newman (Volunteer), Sara Nichols (Land of Sky) and I met last week with Dr. Ed Katz, Associate Provost, and Dr. Susan Reiser (UNCA Faculty member in the New Media and Computer Science Dept.). UNCA has committed funds to pay for a group of students to help us develop a model for assessing broadband need vs reality in selected parts of the region. The students will be led by Susan Reiser, who has considerable experience in marketing, new media, and technology.

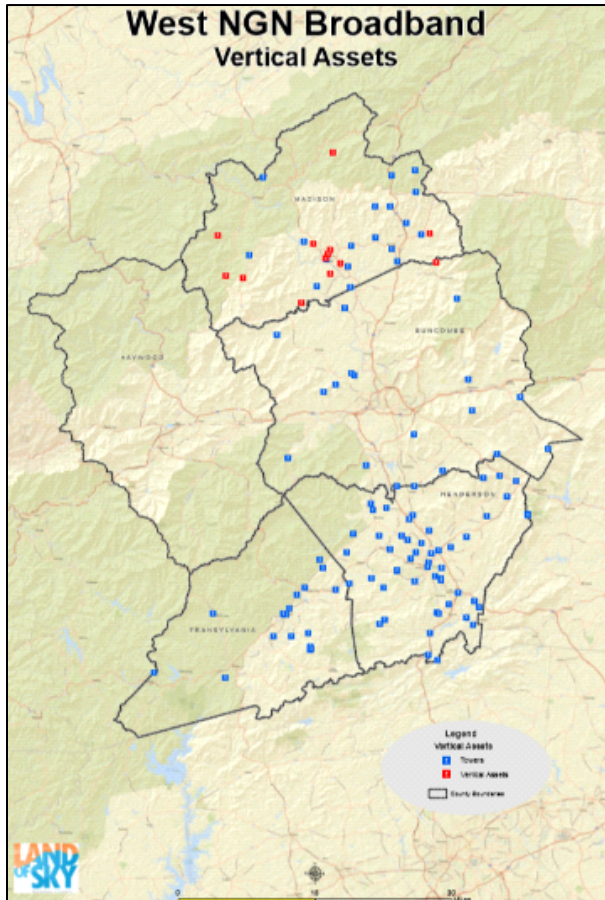
We are presently developing the research design. The end-product should be a website that can be used by citizens, local officials, and service providers to evaluate what broadband options are available, what services are actually provided, and what local neighborhoods are underserved.

Let me, Stagg, or Sara Nichols know if you would like to be involved in this project or would like to review the outline of how we plan to proceed over the coming semester. The first phase should be completed by the end of the school year in May. Special thanks to Stagg Newman for leading this effort.

Progress Point #3: Phase Two

Sara Nichols (Land of Sky) and Hunter Goosmann (ERC) have been working on the community profiles. These profiles will be used to help the communities with expansion efforts and give them a snapshot of potential opportunities. They are finalizing the Madison County profile and are collecting data in Transylvania County.

The WestNGN Broadband Survey was deployed within Transylvania County as a first step in getting the demand aggregation complete. The Committee decided to concentrate efforts in each county one-at-a-time to maximize efforts. Currently, we have received over 200 from Transylvania County so far. Once a community has survey responses, they can proceed with provider meetings. This is an important part of the process to identify areas that are underserved, unserved, or have potential for system upgrades. If you have connections in that area (or any of the Land of Sky area) please help us by forwarding on the survey to them.



<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LOSREZ>

Additionally, the Land of Sky team has collected information from the communities to start developing community and vertical asset maps. These maps will help isolate opportunities for community-based deployment by identifying ways that public assets could be leveraged to extend services to additional customers.

Little Progress Point #1: Asheville Change

With the departure of Gary Jackson as City Manager, it was determined by the Steering Committee to await the arrival of the new city manager prior to having further conversations with Hotwire. The new city manager has been selected and began her work in Asheville.

It is my intent to renew conversation with Hotwire or another firm to assist in meeting Asheville's needs, once we determine how our initiative fits into the plans of the new manager. We look forward to working with her to expand Broadband in the City.

Little Progress Point #2:

Waynesville Status Quo

Little progress has been made in helping Waynesville expand broadband. I have not been successful in renewing conversations with Hotwire about their interests in Waynesville and Haywood County. Following the holidays, I'll renew my efforts to get something started in Waynesville with either Hotwire or another firm. There may be things happening that I am not aware of. If so, please let me know.

Thanks for your continued interest in West Next Generation Network. Let me or Erica Anderson know if you have questions or concerns.

Bill Sederburg

PS Have a great Holiday with speedy downloads and uninterrupted service!