



COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

To: **Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council**
From: **Virgil Turner**
CC: **William E. Bell, City Manager**
Date: **November 3, 2014**
Subject: **Update to the City Council re: Broadband Initiatives**

In April 2014, Montrose voters approved an exemption to a state law prohibiting municipal involvement in providing broadband services, enacted as a result of Senate 05-152. The overwhelming 3-to-1 margin of support for the exemption should be viewed as a mandate from our citizens to address local needs with local solutions. With this milestone behind us, we are now able to consider all options to ensure our community is prepared to address this critical need. This report highlights efforts underway since the April 2014 election.

Region 10 Broadband Implementation Blueprint

In September 2013, the Colorado Division of Information Technology hosted a regional meeting in Montrose to discuss options for moving our broadband effort forward. At this meeting it was suggested we take a regional approach similar to that of Region 9 (southwest Colorado) and Region 12 (north central Colorado). Both of these regions had completed regional plans and were moving forward with implementation. In the spring of 2014, a Region 10 committee prepared a grant application and request for proposals to develop a Broadband Implementation Blueprint for the six-county region. A grant was awarded by the Colorado Department of Local Affairs, with additional grant match coming from all counties, cities and towns in Region 10.

In August, NeoFiber (Glenwood Springs) was selected as the consultant to complete the region's blueprint. During the past two months, meetings across the region have been held with community anchor institutions to ascertain their demand requirements. In addition, discussions were held with service providers to learn what role they are willing to play in solving the region's broadband needs. We are very encouraged with the level of participation from local providers.

NeoFiber has moved into the engineering phase of the project. The Region 10 committee made it very clear, in our request for proposals and the contract with NeoFiber, our intent is to produce an actionable plan. For Montrose specifically, the end product of the NeoFiber engagement, will be engineered plans to network all of our community anchor institutions and a pre-engineering report of what will be involved, including costs, to pass every premise with fiber. In addition, Montrose will benefit from engineering and service provider negotiations being completed to address our external connections to points outside of our region, with the goal of reducing costs and increasing redundancy.

We are expecting the blueprint to be completed in early 2015. The Montrose specific information from this plan will provide us with the information needed to further develop our strategy for funding and implementation in Montrose. Staff from the City of Montrose have played a leadership role in the Region 10 effort and this commitment accounts for a sizable percentage of the time investment made by staff on broadband over the past six months.

Next Steps

Staff has been working with private providers on a number fiber segments. The downtown fiber loop is progressing. Letters, sent by FastTrack Communications, have been mailed to property owners regarding easements to extend the fiber to buildings along the route, on either side of Main Street from Lot Avenue to Rio Grande Avenue. This project will provide availability to fiber optic infrastructure with an initial offering of up to one gigabit throughput. As greater capacity is needed in the future, the fiber infrastructure will support these upgrades.

Several key segments have been identified where extensions of fiber installation should take place next. Staff is working with several providers who have interest in these fiber extensions to develop agreements to construct these segments.

As discussed previously, the NeoFiber implementation blueprint is expected to be completed in early 2015. This blueprint will provide the information necessary to inform our planning for funding and business models for a broader installation of fiber infrastructure in Montrose.