

August 31, 2020 AZBSN COVID-19 Digital Access Task Force Teleconference Report

Attendees

Steve Peters, Oris Friesen, Henry Goldberg, Mark Goldstein, Tracey Beal, Collin Boyce, Melissa Boydston, Amanda Bruno, Kirk Busch, Michael Cohen, Jerry Crow, Terence Ford, Ian Hathcock, Holly Henley, Steve Hill, John Kelly, Tarma Liranzo, Ilana Lowery, Janet Major, Derek Masseth, Sophia Mayberry, Mala Muralidharan, Mauricio Orozco, Cody Pedersen, Lea Marquez Peterson, Alan Pruitt, Michelle Simon, Jeff Sobotka, Nicole Umayam, Karen Ziegler

Updates: State Broadband Director, Telehealth/USDLA, Sun Corridor Network, AZ State Library, ACC, ADE

State Broadband Director Update

Jeff Sobotka, State Broadband Director at the Arizona Commerce Authority (ACA), reviewed his recent activities.

Jeff reported that he is working with ADOT to review responses received to the ADOT RFI on public-private partnership proposals for fiber middle-mile infrastructure along state highways to reach rural communities. There were a number of interesting responses.

Jeff met with T-Mobile's engineering staff to discuss rural wireless towers they are required to deploy as part of their recent acquisition of Sprint. These towers require backhaul facilities to T-Mobile Internet POPs as well as landlords in communities willing to lease space for the towers. These new towers will enable T-Mobile to compete in providing wireless services for rural communities.

Jeff met with the Navajo Nation to discuss using Highway 191 as a broadband corridor. He asked for input from the task force on other state highways that will be significant in providing broadband for rural communities.

Lea Peterson asked Jeff about how Arizona is using federal CARES Act funding to support broadband (as Idaho has allocated CARES funding for broadband). Jeff responded that Arizona has allocated \$40 million from CARES Act funding out of the Governor's GEER fund towards fiber-optic cable deployment along I-17 from Flagstaff to Sunset Point and along I-19 from Tucson to Nogales. ADOT will try to deploy this fiber as soon as possible. Jeff noted that CARES Act funding that is received currently must be spent by December 31, 2020, but Arizona is requesting its Congressional representatives work on approving an extension of this date. For example, wireless towers may be built before the end of the year but providing fiber

backhaul may take longer. ADOT is knowledgeable on the details of obtaining easements for fiber ROW.

Steve Peters asked Jeff about whether he is advocating for federal broadband legislation. Jeff responded there are bills in the U.S. Senate from Senator Gardner of Colorado and Senator Scott of South Carolina that would greatly increase broadband funding for rural areas and Scott's bill provides states block grants for this purpose. If either bill is passed, it would revolutionize the broadband deployment potential in Arizona.

Telehealth and USDLA Update

Janet Major, Associate Director of Education & Facilities for the Arizona Telemedicine Program and Technical Director for the Southwest Telehealth Resource Center as well as Chair of the United States Distance Learning Association (USDLA), provided an update on her telehealth and USDLA activities.

The Arizona Telemedicine Program will be holding its second annual Arizona Telemedicine Policy Symposium on October 1st (see the link in the Appendix Chat to register). This symposium is attended by health care professionals and administrators, and includes updates on federal legislation. State Senator Heather Carter will be a featured speaker.

Janet met with Jojo Campos, Nevada's State Broadband Manager. Janet stated that Nevada's state broadband strategic plan was completed about three years before Arizona's, and they are starting to deploy fiber along their state highways as well as working with T-Mobile on rural wireless towers. Jeff Sobotka commented that Arizona is looking at Nevada's broadband directions, and is particularly considering Utah's deployment of fiber along its state highways.

Janet noted that the Telehealth Broadband Action Team did not meet in August, and their next meeting will be in September.

Janet reported that the USDLA held its national conference in July. The USDLA is working with schools and higher education to assist them in putting courses online and providing best practices. They are also publicizing various grant resources of interest.

Sun Corridor Network

Derek Masseth reported that he will now be working full-time as Executive Director of the Sun Corridor Network because the amount of work has expanded. He has taken a leave of absence from his position as Chief Technology Officer of the University of Arizona.

Derek noted that the Sun Corridor Network recently got funded for a number of projects on the Navajo Nation to upgrade their microwave backhaul facilities.

Arizona State Library Update

Mala Muralidharan, E-rate Administrator for Public Libraries at the Arizona State Library, reported on her recent activities. The Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband Coalition (SHLB) and the State E-rate Coordinators' Alliance (SECA) have filed a request to the FCC to: extend the E-rate and Rural Health Care gift rule until the end of 2020, to make supplemental funding available for E-rate applicants to augment their existing Internet capacity, and to include

cybersecurity as an eligible service for next year's E-rate applications. The supplemental Internet funding required was estimated using USAC's Open-Data Portal, considering the resulting average E-rate discount of 71%, and a survey sent to E-rate applicants to estimate how many of them may file for additional Internet funding (verified with their E-rate consultants): the supplemental cost was estimated to be between \$69 - \$103 million. Mala also remarked that she had an E-rate project management meeting with Gila County, and an environmental issue associated with birds is delaying their E-rate fiber buildout.

Holly Henley, the State Librarian, reported that the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) wrote a grant spotlight on the Arizona State Library distribution of its CARES Act funding (see the Appendix Chat for the link to this). Nicole Umayam added the State Library has completed reviewing its CARES Act funding programs.

Nicole Umayam, Digital Inclusion Library Consultant at the Arizona State Library, reported the Arizona State Library has now established a "Connect-Arizona" initiative with a website (Connect-Arizona.com) that includes the Arizona Free Wi-Fi Map Portal as well as the Library Tech Helpline Service and information on discounted Internet service offers and computers (reported at previous task force meetings). Mala reported the Wi-Fi Map is being promoted extensively. Nicole continues to add new publicly-available Wi-Fi hotspots to this map, and identify which can be accessed indoors vs. outdoors only. Tracey Beal added that the next phase in the Wi-Fi Map work is to identify areas of the state that lack public free Wi-Fi hotspots and encourage organizations to provide hotspots in these areas. Mala is working on updating the Resources section of the Connect-Arizona website to include free homework help and tutoring available.

Steve Peters suggested Alan Pruitt contact some of his Arizona economic development colleagues to connect with Tracey Beal on where new public Wi-Fi hotspots are needed. Steve commented that Chicanos Por La Causa is working on providing free computers for students that lack them, and he will be contacting this organization to get more information.

ACC Update

Lea Marquez Peterson, Commissioner of the Arizona Corporation Commission (ACC), reported on her recent activities.

Lea is promoting the Arizona State Library's Connect-Arizona work and has reached out to Mohave County and other areas of the state that lack public Wi-Fi hotspots to add these. She suggests Connect-Arizona.com add a link to the ACA COVID-19 webpage that lists the discounted Internet service offers of service providers for low-income households.

Lea continues to address the issue of transitioning the Arizona Universal Service Fund (AUSF) to support broadband services in addition to telephone lines in high-cost areas, and presented this to ACC staff to propose this for approval by ACC Commissioners. She noted that there is about \$400,000 in the AUSF and Frontier is the only service provider that has taken advantage of this.

Lea is a participant in the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC) broadband task force. This task force will be holding a national conference in October and she is working to prepare some deliverables for this conference.

ADE Update

Sophia Mayberry, Project Manager in the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction at the Arizona Dept. of Education (ADE), reported on recent ADE activities.

ADE recently published public health benchmarks for opening schools. ADE continues to release guidance and best practices for opening schools and distance learning. It has also created information on social/emotional learning competencies.

Steve Peters asked about whether schools have a problem with sufficient PPE available. Sophia responded schools appear to not have a problem with PPE currently because most schools are only doing distance learning now, but this could possibly be an issue later.

Arizona Technology Council Public Policy Guide

Mark Goldstein reported that his draft of the broadband sections for the Arizona Technology Council 2021 Public Policy Guide was sent to Ben Blink, Governor Ducey's Policy Advisor for Transportation and Technology Innovation (as discussed at the last task force meeting). There will be a meeting with Ben Blink on September 2nd to discuss these broadband sections as well as the rest of the Arizona Technology Council public policy agenda. Mark, several people from the ACA, Steve Peters, Derek Masseth, and Bob Jacobson will be attending this meeting with Ben Blink.

Technology Subcommittee

John Kelly, co-leader of the Technology Subcommittee, reported that at the subcommittee's meeting on August 25th Steve Peters reviewed the draft task force recommendations document and got some feedback on it from attendees.

John Kelly is working with Mark Goldstein on some case studies and business models discussion to go in the Technology section of the task force recommendations document.

There will be a Technology subcommittee meeting on Tuesday September 1st but no agenda has been set for this meeting.

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Task Force Preliminary Recommendations Document

Steve Peters is continuing work on drafting the task force's preliminary (Phase One) recommendations document.

Steve reviewed some significant changes to the draft document that he has made including sections on: understanding broadband issues and challenges, barriers to broadband deployment, community options for broadband, new and innovative last mile technologies/solutions, Arizona infrastructure initiatives, and other Arizona initiatives. There are also new recommendations on a "Broadband Revolving Infrastructure Fund" and a "Student Digital Access Fund".

Janet Major commented that this task force document should include recommendations from the Arizona Statewide Broadband Strategic Plan published in 2018, in which she and some

other members of our task force participated. Janet noted that this strategic plan recommended the establishment of a State Broadband Director (which has occurred with the appointment of Jeff Sobotka) and the establishment of a broadband advisory council, which is a similar role to what this COVID-19 Digital Access Task Force is performing. Karen Ziegler, who led the State Broadband Strategic Plan work while at the Arizona Dept. of Administration (ADOA), commented that the 2018 Strategic Plan acknowledged previous relevant state broadband work, and this task force should similarly acknowledge the continuum of broadband work in the past. Steve stated he would appreciate Karen participate in the editing of the task force recommendations document to include relevant points from the 2018 State Broadband Strategic Plan or appropriately reference this document.

Steve stated that he will arrange a meeting in the next couple of days of core people to work on editing the draft task force recommendations document (he tried to arrange such an editing meeting last week but was not able to). After the document is edited, Steve will arrange a meeting of the overall task force to provide feedback on the recommendations document. Steve added that Insight will be assisting on putting the recommendations document in a nice format for publication, including a Table of Contents.

Next Steps

The next AZBSN COVID-19 Digital Access Task Force overall meeting will be held on Monday, September 14th at 7:30 am. There will not be a meeting of the overall task force on September 7th because it is Labor Day.

This week, the Technology subcommittee will meet on Tuesday September 1st at 9:30 am. No meetings will be held this week of the Education and Libraries and Funding and Resources subcommittees.

Steve will schedule a meeting in the next couple of days of the core editing team to work on editing the task force recommendations document, and after that will schedule a meeting of the overall task force to provide feedback on this edited document.

Henry Goldberg and Oris Friesen will write up a summary report of today's task force meeting.

Appendix: Chat from Zoom

07:49:03 From Lea Marquez Peterson :

In case it interests you: this Tuesday - Webinar 2:00 PM ET Fiber
Broadband Ass'n: Fiber Broadband Drivers and Trends (Complimentary Webinar)
Register: <https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/2624785351920305677>

07:50:09 From Lea Marquez Peterson :

Fiber broadband networks bring fiber all the way to the residence or business. Fiber broadband availability has increased from near zero to about 40% of homes in North America in the past 20 years. The combination of continued bandwidth demand increases (accelerated by the pandemic), lower operating expense, government support for fiber in lower density deployments, and technology innovations are improving the business case to bring fiber broadband to millions more subscribers. Join John George, Senior Director, Solutions and Professional Services at OFS to learn about current

fiber broadband drivers and trends. Register:
<https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/2624785351920305677>

- 07:54:04 From Janet Major :
Distance Learning Resources including grant info: <https://usdla.org/distance-learning-coronavirus-covid-19-information/>
- 07:55:26 From Janet Major :
2nd Annual Telemedicine Policy Symposium Thursday Oct 1 @ 1pm-3pm
<https://telemedicine.arizona.edu/>
- 07:57:25 From Jeff Sobotka :
And its a good movie! <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt6866224/>
- 08:00:27 From NicoleUmayam :
<https://www.imls.gov/grant-spotlights/book-delivery-virtual-scavenger-hunts-how-arizona-helping-libraries-and-communities>
- 08:01:03 From Lea Marquez Peterson :
I continue to promote Connect-Arizona.com and tout the Libraries great work! I've reached out to Mohave County and other areas of the state that have gaps in services and asked them to add to the Libraries map.
- 08:04:10 From NicoleUmayam :
<https://www.cplc.org/>
- 08:04:11 From Sophia sophia.mayberry@azed.gov :
Chicanos Por La Causa
- 08:04:22 From Mauricio Orozco :
CPLC- Chicanos Por La Causa
- 08:07:20 From Lea Marquez Peterson :
Suggestion to Connect-Arizona.com - add a link to the page on the AZ Commerce Authority's COVID19 page that lists the low income programs offered by each telecom company
- 08:11:07 From Mark Goldstein :
Here's the current Arizona Technology Council's State Broadband Policy Brief 2021 that will be the subject of Wednesday's broadband meeting with Ben Blink of the Governor's office. Hope to have and share the entire draft State Technology Policy roll up before long.
- 08:12:59 From NicoleUmayam :
Gaps as well as missing metadata (SSIDs, wifi reach, etc)
- 08:13:43 From Mark Goldstein :
Yeah! Adding SSID would be very useful wherever practical. Thanks!

08:13:46 From Alan Pruitt :
alan@waedd.org | 928-304-1802

08:25:36 From Janet Major :
https://azlibrary.gov/sites/default/files/erate_2018_az_broadbandstrategicplan_final.PDF

08:31:36 From NicoleUmayam :
Agreed. The Strategic Plan also incorporated listening sessions throughout the state, gaining insight and feedback from communities directly

08:32:09 From Mauricio Orozco :
Does anyone know if there is a similar program to COX Connect2Compete in Northern AZ? Thanks

08:32:24 From Amanda Bruno :
Karen, do you know when/if the statewide broadband plan will be updated again?

08:33:38 From Ilana Lowery :
@Mauricio check with Sparklight (formerly Cable One). They may have something.

08:33:58 From Mauricio Orozco :
Thanks

08:34:01 From Karen Ziegler :
The update will be the responsibility of ACA now since we've established the Broadband Office.

08:34:10 From Amanda Bruno :
Got it. Thank you :)

Addition from Mark Goldstein after the meeting:

Free zoom interview with FCC Chairman Ajit Pai on the Digital Divide conducted by CEI (<https://cei.org/>) this Thursday, 9/3/20 at 9:00 AM (PST). Described as:

Repeal for Resilience feat. FCC Chairman Ajit Pai - #NeverNeeded and the Digital Divide

Some of the most helpful policy responses to the coronavirus pandemic loosen rather than impose restrictions. Many of the regulations that are being scrapped to fight COVID-19 were #NeverNeeded in the first place. Please join CEI for an online discussion about how streamlining regulations and clearing regulatory sludge at the federal, state, and local levels can address broadband access inequities and better prepare Americans for the new normal. The event will feature Federal Communications Commission Chairman Ajit Pai in conversation with Kent Lassman.

Registration at https://cei-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_GU_KPfHfTteJypT0u4SOMg.