

November 30, 2020 AZBSN COVID-19 Digital Access Task Force Teleconference Report

Attendees

Steve Peters, Oris Friesen, Henry Goldberg, Mark Goldstein, Robert Alvarado, Marni Anbar, Tracey Beal, Andrew Bevington, Melissa Boydston, Kirk Busch, Gene Carl, Michael Cohen, Alexandra Dominguez, Terence Ford, Ian Hathcock, Holly Henley, Steve Hill, Shereka Jackson, John Kelly, Ryan Kelly, Tarma Liranzo, Sophia Mayberry, Clarence McAllister, Dominic Papa, Cody Pedersen, Lawrie Prickett, Jeff Sobotka, Karen Ziegler

Task Force Recommendations Report and Participants Survey

Task Force Recommendations Report

Steve Peters stated the task force recommendations report is finalized and posted on the task force website report landing page. Kathy Kramer of Insight has been working with Steve on a cover letter and press release. The press release should be sent out this week. Steve will send a cover letter to task force participants that they can use and personalize to send the task force report to their contacts.

Mark Goldstein stated that he reached out to three key national broadband news sources to publicize our task force report: Benton Foundation's Headlines Daily Digest, K&H Broadband Digest, and Broadband Breakfast (the first two carried this on November 23rd). See Appendix 2 for more details on these news sources.

Next Phase of Task Force

Steve stated the next phase of the task force will be to work on implementing some of the recommendations in the task force report. He would like 4-5 volunteers to work with him to go through the task force report to determine which recommendations the task force could work on – people interested in working on that should contact Steve. Steve will contact MSS Technologies about assisting the task force with this implementation process.

Task Force Participants Survey

Steve reminded task force participants to fill out the Google Form he sent to provide their organizational and contact information so he has up-to-date information for all participants.

Updates: State Broadband Director, ADE

State Broadband Director Update

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

Jeff stated COVID-19 is creating a lot of uncertainty in how various organizations such as school districts function, which require short-term to mid-term issues to be addressed.

Jeff is partnering with the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) and several federal agencies to put together a monthly series of workshops (webinars/town halls) beginning in March 2021 on getting broadband to rural communities. Mark Goldstein and Steve Peters are helping with the planning of these workshops.

Jeff continues to work with the Arizona Dept. of Transportation on the I-17 and I-19 fiber deployment projects as well as discussing with Derek Masseth of the Sun Corridor Network their potential use of this fiber.

The Navajo Nation has been hit hard by COVID-19, and Jeff works with them on broadband solutions to their challenges.

The Telehealth Broadband Action Team (BAT) will be meeting this week, and is focusing on appropriate topics for the NTIA workshops discussed above.

Steve Peters asked what actions the Governor's Office and the Legislature are planning in the broadband area for the next legislature session. Jeff responded that he does not know this but he has expressed his objectives to them. John Kelly commented that the legislative session will try to function normally but may only focus on high-priority budget issues if there is a COVID shutdown since they lack capabilities and policy directives to function appropriately with videoconferencing.

.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 is working on an updated version of their School Status Tracker, which indicates whether schools are operating in in-person, remote learning, or hybrid in-person/remote mode.

ADE announced that a report on their school safety task force is now posted on their website.

As COVID-19 cases spike, school districts are making decisions about whether schools should be kept open or be closed, and some school districts are being proactive in planning ahead for this.

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Dominic Papa “Smart Cities, Smart Regions, and A Smart State” Presentation

Dominic Papa, Vice President of Smart State Initiatives with the Arizona Commerce Authority, delivered a presentation entitled “Smart Cities, Smart Regions, and a Smart State”. Following is a summary of key points from the presentation. The full presentation will be posted on the task force website.

Dominic noted that his background includes a master's thesis at ASU on the intersection of technology and urban management; smart city work for the City of Phoenix, eventually expanding to a smart region; and then he joined the ACA to lead work in this area.

There is no single agreed-on definition of a smart city. Over time, cities have come to understand that is not a single project that makes them smart, rather it is the process of using technology to continually improve government efficiency, enhance citizen well-being, and solve complex problems.

Smart cities also need to come up with approaches to address the challenge of the digital divide for those who lack access to digital resources.

Traditional city management challenges include: limited budgets with increasing citizen demands, burdensome regulatory frameworks, limited staff, and procurement challenges. A goal of smart cities is to change the local government culture to address such challenges using technology effectively to do so.

Dominic stated there are only two smart cities in the world: Barcelona and Tel Aviv. Smarter cities is a more appropriate term with various examples of that in Arizona (e.g. Mesa broadband and Wi-Fi expansion, Tempe Innovation Fund, Scottsdale Smart City Youth) and other cities in the U.S. including the San Diego smart city initiative with GE on smart streetlights using LED lighting, the Los Angeles Internet of Things consortium, Dallas, and Kansas City.

Many issues for cities extend to their surrounding regions such as traffic congestion, air pollution, digital access, water security, economic resilience, and COVID responses. The Greater Phoenix Smart Region Consortium, called "The Connective", was launched in 2019 including 22 municipalities with industry and academic partners in a broad public-private partnership. The Connective is intended to encourage collaboration and innovation for challenges faced in the whole region, and is the first such smart region initiative in the nation. Southern Arizona around Tucson has also created a smart region initiative, and Dominic will be helping northern Arizona around Flagstaff establish a smart region.

The eventual goal is to head towards a smart state that includes rural communities as well as the urban smart regions. The state government can advance research along various vertical areas of application (e.g. autonomous vehicles), and the regions can implement these to achieve economies-of-scale in implementation of commercialized technologies across the state. In a smart state, we will see transformation in key domains: health, mobility, urban solutions, finance, and education. This means every industry, business, and government at all levels stepping up to collaborate and accelerate digitization efforts to drive statewide movement. Dominic believes Arizona will become the #1 testbed/proving ground in the nation for such smart state activities.

An education smart state paradigm being considered includes the Sun Corridor Network, ASU and other universities and community colleges, and K-12 school districts. The issue is whether a statewide smart education network could be developed through appropriate collaboration.

Jeff Sobotka commented that the ACA works together on broadband and smart state initiatives, and The Connective is a unique collaboration where all 22 municipalities in the Greater Phoenix area are involved.

Mark Goldstein asked about the financial sustainability of The Connective. Dominic responded that municipalities and industry partners pay a membership fee to be part of the consortium.

This funding enables hiring of staff to work on the consortium. Industry partners include Cox Communications, T-Mobile, SRP, Intel, Dell, and Microsoft. The municipalities bring the challenges that need to be addressed, the industry partners bring the technology solutions expertise that can address these challenges, and ASU brings relevant research expertise. Dominic added that this first year was focused on making The Connective sustainable, and he hopes that 2021 will be a banner year for progress.

Steve Peters noted that our task force is emphasizing digital access to consider the range of digital issues that need to be addressed beyond connectivity. Dominic responded that he agrees a systems-level approach is required to address all the challenges (e.g. students also need devices and digital literacy skills). Steve and Terence Ford stated there is a lot of synergy between our task force report and Dominic's smart region/state initiatives, and Steve and Mark Goldstein would like to meet with Dominic to discuss the task force report recommendations. Dominic responded that "The Connective" can partner with the task force on how to implement task force recommendations.

Robert Alvarado remarked he would like to speak with Dominic about Chicanos Por La Causa (CPLC) collaboration with these activities, and Dominic welcomed this.

Steve Peters commented that the City of Tucson is developing a municipal wireless network which could evolve to become a smart city initiative. Dominic responded that cities are hard-pressed to provide immediate solutions for the COVID-19 crisis, but he would like to see how such networks can be extended for broader smart city initiatives. Steve added that communities have built networks with CARES Act funding, but asked whether these will be financially sustainable in the future. Dominic responded that cities are starting to work with school districts and colleges to use common resources that will make them more likely to be sustainable.

Kirk Busch stated that his organization Big Data Southwest focuses on linkages between data centers and smart regions. Kirk asked how other Arizona regions are going to engage with The Connective and what work will be done to enable the Sun Corridor Network (SCN) project to operate statewide. Dominic responded that Sandra Watson, President of the ACA, has a smart state vision for Arizona, The Connective has a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Southern Arizona smart region, and the intent would be to have MOUs with a Northern Arizona smart region as well as with rural communities to create a statewide network of smart initiatives collaboration. They are working on a model for SCN, ASU, K-12 collaboration and want to extend this across the state – they have applied for federal grants to accomplish this. Steve Peters noted that our task force report recommends creating an SCN strategic planning process, and Dominic agreed that this relates to their goal.

Next Steps

The next AZBSN COVID-19 Digital Access Task Force overall meeting will be held on Monday, December 7th at 7:30 am. Future task force meeting in December will be on December 14th and December 28th (no meeting on December 21st).

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

Appendix 1: Chat from Zoom

Terence Ford to Everyone (7:48 AM)

Steve P./Mark G. - I'd like to volunteer to participate on the Recommendations Implementation Planning Team. Thx, Terence

Jeff Sobotka to Everyone (7:50 AM)
Jeff Sobotka Cell 602-432-0004

Mark Goldstein to Everyone (8:03 AM)
Connect K-12 current state of classroom connectivity across the United States report available at https://connectk12.org/static/media/Connect_K12_2020_Executive_Summary_Full_Report.d84a960a.pdf
And Connect K-12 free tool that aggregates, analyzes, and visualizes E-rate data at <https://connectk12.org/>

Mark Goldstein to Everyone (8:09 AM)
New America The Cost of Connectivity in the Navajo Nation report from October available at <https://www.newamerica.org/oti/reports/cost-connectivity-navajo-nation/>

Mark Goldstein to Everyone (8:19 AM)
National Governors Association released Governor Strategies to Expand Affordable Broadband Access on 11/17/20. Overview and download at <https://www.nga.org/center/publications/expand-affordable-broadband/>

Dominic Papa to Everyone (8:24 AM)
Thanks Jeff!

Dominic Papa to Everyone (8:30 AM)
domp@azcommerce.com

Marni Anbar to Everyone (8:30 AM)
I would love to know what cplc is. ;-)

Terence Ford to Everyone (8:30 AM)
Excellent presentation and key messages Dominic with respect to the Smart City vision, strategy and transformation approach per business agility. Insight is involved with the City of Tucson's initiative and has supported various Smart City initiatives. One of our former executives (Curt Cornum) was closely involved with Smart City strategies in partnership with the ATIC. Insight would welcome an opportunity to engage with you and team also. Best Regards, Terence

Terence Ford to Everyone (8:34 AM)
Steve P, Kathy Kramer will be touching base on the Marketing Press Release status update with you this afternoon. Best Regards, Terence

Mark Goldstein to Everyone (8:34 AM)
Arizona Technology Council's 2021 State & Federal Public Policy Guide has been released! Access at <https://www.aztechcouncil.org/public-policy/>. Thanks to all who contributed!

Appendix 2: AZBSN COVID-19 Digital Access Task Force Report Publicity

Mark Goldstein reported that since the 11/20/20 release of the AZBSN COVID-19 Digital Access Task Force Report, he has reached out to three key national broadband news sources to request editorial inclusion of a notice and link to the report landing page (<https://www.arizonatele.org/taskforce-report-2020.html>).

Mark knows **Kevin Taglang**, editor of **Benton Foundation's Headlines Daily Digest**. The 11/23/ 20 issue (<https://www.benton.org/newsletter/daily-digest-11232020-jill-paton-walsh>) under the Broadband/Internet category carried:

AZBSN COVID-19 Digital Access Task Force Report and Recommendations | [Arizona Broadband Stakeholder Network](#)

You can subscribe to the Benton Foundation's Headlines Daily Digest send every weekday or their Weekly Digest at <https://www.benton.org/headlines>. Their Broadband for America Now report from October is a great read and can be found at <https://www.benton.org/publications> FYI.

Jim Baller, noted telecom attorney and policy advocate long published the **Baller Stokes & Lide Broadband Digest**, but recently moved to **Keller and Heckman** through which the newsletter continues to be published. The **K&H Broadband Digest** from 11/23 carried:

Arizona Broadband Stakeholder Network releases COVID-19 Digital Access Task Force Report and Recommendations :: [Arizona Telecommunications and Information Council](#)

You can subscribe to the K&H Broadband Digest from the K&H Telecom Practice page at <https://www.khlaw.com/telecommunications>. Also, check out their **Beyond Telecom Law Blog** at <https://www.beyondtelecomlawblog.com/>.

Mark also knows **Drew Clark** who publishes **Broadband Breakfast** (<http://broadbandbreakfast.com/>). Mark reached out and Drew plans to include a mention of the Task Force report in the near future. You can sign up for twice weekly Broadband Breakfast news alerts at <http://broadbandbreakfast.com/>. They hold periodic Broadband Breakfast Live Online Events of interest and you can find Drew's latest articles at <http://broadbandbreakfast.com/author/drew-clark/>.

Once the AZBSN press release, cover letter, messaging template, and other materials are ready, we'll be able to get additional traction with local, regional, and national institutions and publications.