

STATE: MISSOURI

Date of Report: February 1, 2008

Nature of report (preliminary, final, advisory, executive/legislative): Preliminary

Key recommendations:

1. Engage a firm to analyze Internet accessibility and prepare maps for the current level and price of broadband access available in every corner of Missouri. This step is necessary to proceed with assessing broadband usage and deployment in Missouri.
2. Recommend funding, as soon as possible, through either the supplemental or regular budget process in order to engage a sole source provider or conduct a RFP to complete the mapping project.
3. The task force understands that from the outset certain rural communities may support only a single provider, but ideally rural communities would benefit from increased competition among multiple providers. To that end, the task force recommends that Missouri legislators and regulators explore ways to eliminate any and all barriers for encouraging public and private sector investment in the broadband infrastructure and consider establishing financial incentives for such investment.
4. Extend the time frame of the task force to end on January 12, 2009, in order for the task force to conduct a more thorough and complete analysis of the barriers to broadband deployment in Missouri and develop a more comprehensive plan of action to deploy broadband access to all areas of Missouri.
5. Request the Department of Economic Development review and report to the task force all existing tax credit and other financial programs to determine if one or more could provide incentives for providers to invest in broadband infrastructure in unserved and underserved areas or provide incentives to consumers to better utilize broadband options in their area. The task force recommends creating a subcommittee to review these programs to determine if any can be used by the consumer and/or provider.
6. If the task force is extended under Recommendation #4 above, the task force recommends creating several subcommittees to explore all possibilities and more thoroughly review programs not only in Missouri, but programs being adopted in other states. The subcommittees will determine if any programs should be adopted by the state of Missouri to be used by the consumer and or provider.
7. In addition to investigation of tax credit programs, DED should consider the benefits derived from the creation of a fund to provide necessary assistance in high cost areas to companies for the investment of broadband access infrastructure in unserved and underserved areas.

8. Engage a firm to develop an in-depth, neutral report to identify specifics on broadband need and usage in the State of Missouri. The firm must be a neutral entity that is able to protect provider data from open records requests and ensure data confidentiality through non-disclosure agreements (NDAs). A budget appropriation will be needed to fund this more in-depth review.

The Task Force placed priority on Recommendation Nos. 1, 2, and 4.

Key programs initiated: None

Recommended Appropriation: None

Web link to agency or task force: <http://www.ltgov.mo.gov/ruralhsi/index.htm>

Statement of Values:

- High-speed Internet access in Missouri's rural communities is of great significance to economic development, agriculture, and education.
- Many rural communities in Missouri currently do not possess the information and communication infrastructure that enables its residents access to high-speed Internet.
- Aggressively pursuing high-speed Internet access in rural communities has the potential to markedly increase Missouri's economic growth by creating opportunities in rural areas that have not been available because of a lack of access.
- It is a priority of the State of Missouri to support and promote widespread access to high-speed networks in Missouri's rural communities.
- By combining the collective ideas of both the government, citizens and representatives of private industry, the technological needs of Missouri rural communities can be heard and solutions can be reached.

Where we've been: Not addressed.

Where we are today: Not addressed. Recommendations in report call for mapping and assessment of current levels of broadband availability.

Where we want to be: Not addressed.

How are we going to get there? Next phase steps identified in recommendations summarized above.

Broadband functionality (tiers of service) -

The Task Force adopted the California Broadband Task Force's definition of "broadband":

- Broadband is defined by the ability to perform online applications at a reasonable performance level for the end user.
- Broadband is a range of speeds and will evolve over time as applications and needs change. It is a summation of the downstream data rate (transmission to the user) and upstream data rate (transmission from the user).
- The ratio of the downstream and upstream must be a minimum of 10:1 (the ratio of the downstream and upstream data rates can increase from 10:1 to fully symmetrical 1:1).
- Broadband must have the capability to be always on, and have a sustainable steady state data rate.
- Burstable speeds provide benefit to users, but should not be considered in the same manner as steady data rates.
- The minimum speed required to use the most basic of broadband-enabled applications is 512 kbps, and this minimum data rate is expected to increase over time.
- An increasing scale that continues to differentiate within speed tiers allows stakeholders to measure specific broadband availability over time.