



Why We Need More Fiber

ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT

Economic Development, Education, Public Health, Sustainable Development ... We Could Go On

Excerpts from a new report to the Portland (Oregon) mayor and city council, describing why a Community Fiber Network is vital

Economic Development: Economic development planners here and elsewhere envision attracting new businesses to the City by offering state-of-the-art communications infrastructure. Very high bandwidth is increasingly a key criterion for companies deciding where to locate new offices and other facilities.

Fiber could draw software companies, video production houses, and companies that need access to their satellite facilities across the US and the world. In the national and global competition for businesses, fiber would add incomparable bandwidth to the City's existing attractions that make it a famously attractive place to work and live. Fiber could also enable redevelopment or revitalization of areas and attract and retain workers.

Small and High-Tech Business: Fiber would benefit one of the Portland area's most innovative new businesses. Versis Online is a small, entrepreneurial, local firm that since 2006 has operated Versis Videogame Center, which offers a next-generation, innovative gaming experience. The Center offers video game consoles, high-definition TVs, comfortable chairs, and food. The company has a goal of raising \$2 million to finance new stores in 2008.

Portland Community Fiber connections from Versis stores to the Internet open up the possibility of an international gaming experience over an affordable, robust, and stable connection. High-speed, high-capacity connections bring out-of-the-area gamers, including international players, into the centers without lost connections and other disruptions in service so commonly associated with a lower-speed connection.

Indeed, community fiber could dramatically grow Portland's fledgling digital media/gaming industry, which is already strongly established in San Francisco and Seattle. Fiber could also benefit the larger Portland software de-

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velopment industry. To be viable, a game or piece of software has to be tested online and adjusted based on data gathered from the tests – it can take thousands of high-bandwidth transfers for such tests – and this bandwidth is essential if the developer is to compete with other applications in development.

Education: Fiber enables heretofore-unthinkable means of educating and inspiring students. Not only could the Community Fiber Network give students and parents access to high-bandwidth school resources and learning tools, but it can also give them access to dynamic learning tools from around the world, unhindered by distance or capacity.

Creative educational tools can leverage the power of fiber bandwidth. For example, the emerging "Brainstormer" gaming program uses the motifs, aesthetics, and attractions of video gaming to expose young people and other users to a "game" dedicated to sharing of ideas over high-bandwidth connections. Brainstormer's potential is limited only by the bandwidth over which its users interact.

Public Health: In April 2007, Sacred Heart Medical Center in Eugene initiated a pilot project to create a telemedicine link between its pediatric department and specialists at Doernbecher Children's Hospital in Portland. The goal of the project is to reduce the number of children transferred to Doernbecher. Pediatricians at Sacred Heart will conduct video consultations with pediatric internists at Doernbecher to determine if a child needs to be transferred to its pediatric intensive care unit.

Community Fiber can also connect rural areas to Portland medical facilities in another practical use of telemedicine. The Director of One Sky Center recently

testified before the US Senate that there exists "room for continued involvement and use of telemedicine throughout Indian Country. Telemedicine is a powerful means of delivering consultation and education to the front lines from centers of expertise."

Sustainable Development: The Portland-Multnomah County Sustainable Development Commission says FTTP allows citizens to use a robust, stable, high-capacity electronic communications channel to conduct business – reducing vehicle miles traveled, improving air quality and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It promotes telecommuting by enabling small- to medium-sized businesses to efficiently participate in the global marketplace through use of videoconferencing and electronic file transfers.

For individual citizens, it provides electronic access as way to avoid driving (for instance, using online banking, using the Internet to take a class or telecommuting to work). Finally, a robust communications infrastructure would reduce the use of paper by allowing people to transfer large data files over the Internet.

In the Sustainable Development Commission's vision, Portland's economy is made up largely of small businesses and these businesses need a robust and stable communication infrastructure in order to grow. FTTP will assist these businesses to remain sustainable, profitable and support them in their ability to provide jobs and contribute to the livability of our city. **BBP**

You can read the full report, which was written by Portland's Office of Cable Communications and Franchise Management, at <http://www.portlandonline.com/shared/cfm/image.cfm?id=174628>