Utah Broadband Advisory Council

Thursday, February 16, 2012
12:00-1:30 p.m.
Utah State Capitol

Attendees:

Tara Thue, Governor's Office of Economic Development
Kelleigh Cole, Governor's Office of Economic Development
Chris Conabee, Governor's Office of Economic Development
John Harvey, Utah Public Service Commission
Spencer Jenkins, Automated Geographic Reference Center
Bert Granberg, Automated Geographic Reference Center
Stephen Fletcher, Utah Department of Technology Services
Ken Petersen, Utah Department of Technology Services
Stephanie Weiss, Utah Department of Technology Services
Gary Ricks, Utah Department of Technology Services
Nancy Grisel, Governor's Office of Planning and Budget
Lynne Yocom, Utah Department of Transportation
Shirlee Silversmith, Utah Division of Indian Affairs
Donna Jones Morris, Utah State Library

Jim Stewart, Utah Education Network
Jeff Egly, Utah Education Network
Deb LaMarche, Utah Telehealth Network
Sharon Bertelsen, Ballard Spahr
Steve Proctor, Utah Communications Agency Networks
Eric Isom, CenturyLink
Steve Taylor, All West Communications
Dave Ryan, Strata Networks
Tyler Rasmussen, Strata Networks
Steve Corbato, University of Utah
Jared Anderson, Emery Telcom
Joseph Wavra, Enterprise Technologies/Goshute
Charles Baldwin, Enterprise Technologies/Goshute (call in)
Jacob Barlow, CenturyLink (call in)

Summary:

Deb LaMarche presented an overview of the Utah Telehealth Network (UTN). UTN uses electronic information and telecom technologies to support distant clinical health care, patient and professional health related education, public health and health administration. The network is managed by the University of Utah, governed by the UTN Advisory Board, and is open to all healthcare providers who wish to participate.

UTN offers healthcare providers access to videoconferencing, media services such as live streaming and video-on-demand, telemedicine application development, electronic transmission of digital images, networking services, security management and 24-hour technical support. These services are particularly important to rural healthcare providers who often lack access to radiology services and other specialties. The network also enables prison telemedicine, which reduces the need for inmate transports, and facilitates home monitoring for elderly patients and patients with chronic conditions.

Telehealth has traditionally received support from the Rural Health Care Program, which provides reduced rates to rural health care providers for telecommunications services and Internet access charges related to the use of telemedicine and telehealth. In 2006, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) rolled out the Rural Health Care Pilot Program to connect both rural and urban healthcare facilities, which would help rural facilities connect to urban facilities, creating statewide networks.

The program funds 85% of the one-time and recurring network costs and lasts until 2016. Under the program, urban and rural facilities pay the same price for any given connection speed. Health care facilities pay their portion directly to the

provider and the provider receives a reimbursement for the remainder of the cost from the Universal Service Administration Company (USAC). For-profit facilities are not eligible for the discount but they are allowed to connect into the network if they pay the full price. This creates a financial burden for some facilities, particularly independent doctors' offices because they are considered for-profit sites.

Utah was awarded $9,045,959 to implement the Utah ARCHES (Advancing Rural Connections for Healthcare and E-health Services) Project, through the FCC's pilot program. It is led by the University of Utah and co-managed by Intermountain Healthcare. Intermountain Healthcare will connect 24 locations and the University of Utah will connect 40 locations under the program, with the possibility of adding 10 more if funding is available.

Some challenges the program has encountered include the administrative burden on UTN and the challenge of determining "fair" pricing for non-eligible sites, in accordance with the grant. Another challenge is that the FCC has not announced an on-going program to sustain and build upon the pilot project. There are also some areas of the network which lack redundancy. UTN may request letters of support from Advisory Council members or may use the Council as an example of collaboration if the network needs to respond to the FCC's Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking.

Tara Thue led a discussion on the 2012 Utah Legislative Session. Two bills were summarized and discussed:

- H.B 53 creates the Utah Education Network (UEN) Board, which will be the governing board for UEN. The Board will have authority to hire the executive director and establish policy for the operation of the network. The State Superintendent will appoint four members to represent public education; the Commissioner of Higher Education will appoint four members representing higher education; the President of the Utah College of Applied Technology shall appoint one member to represent the college; and the Governor will appoint one member representing the state library and one member representing the Office of the Governor. Council members discussed the bill, and its potential effects on UEN operations, and were generally supportive of the legislation. The bill was passed by the House and Senate and is waiting on the Governor's signature.

- S.B. 229 modifies the regulatory authority of the Public Service Commission. The bill amends the definition of a telephone corporation; defines Internet service including Internet protocol and Internet protocol enabled services, and exempts regulation by the Public Service Commission. CenturyLink has requested to work with Senator Bramble to ensure that parity exists between service providers of different technologies. The bill is currently being considered by the Senate.