

BEFORE THE WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

In the Matter of Developing a Survey to
Identify Factors Preventing The Widespread
Availability and Use of Broadband
Technologies

DOCKET NO. UT-070986

INITIAL COMMENTS OF PUBLIC COUNSEL

September 7, 2007

I. INTRODUCTION

Public Counsel submits these comments in response to the Commission's August 9, 2007 Notice of Opportunity to File Written Comments in this docket. We look forward to participating in this proceeding to develop an appropriate survey to identify factors preventing the widespread availability and use of broadband technologies.

II. COMMENTS

Geographic Scope of Survey

In order to conduct a statistically meaningful survey, a relatively large number of households will need to be surveyed in, for example, each of Washington's 39 counties. While smaller geographic analysis may also be useful, perhaps at the Zip-Code level, given the large number of Zip-Code areas in Washington, generating survey results which can be analyzed with statistical precision would likely be very costly.

The Commission may also wish to consider mailing a modified version of the survey to each of Washington's 29 federally recognized tribes.¹ This would allow for some additional data gathering and analysis regarding the availability and use of broadband technology on tribal lands.

Questions for the Survey Instrument

Demographic Information

The survey should carefully collect substantial demographic data, including data on the following:

- age group (e.g. 18-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, and 70+),
- race/ethnicity,
- income,
- urban/rural, and
- gender.

The survey should be conducted in multiple languages, reflecting, to the extent feasible, language diversity in the state.

Factors that may prevent widespread availability and use of broadband technology

To determine factors that may be preventing the widespread availability and use of broadband technology, questions in the following areas should be posed:

- Basic service in household²
 - » Basic service provider.
- Wireless service in household.
 - » Wireless service provider.

¹ See Governor's Office of Indian Affairs: <http://www.goia.wa.gov/Tribal-Information/Map.htm>

² While this may seem unnecessary due to the fact that telephone surveys are not allowed to call wireless phones, number portability will result in some wireless-only households and VoIP-only households showing up.

- Computer in household? If “yes,” then:
 - » Vintage of computer.
- Internet user?
- Internet user at home? If “yes,” then:
 - » Technologies associated with Internet use?
 - a) E-mail
 - b) Chat
 - c) Web browsing
 - d) Views video
 - e) File sharing
 - f) Video uploads
 - g) Work from home
 - h) Online shopping
 - i) Online banking/financial activities
 - j) Other?
 - » Broadband in household? If “yes,” then:
 - a) Broadband provider.
 - b) Download and upload speed, if known.
 - c) Price paid for broadband, if known.
 - » Dial-up user? If “yes,” then:
 - a) Who is Internet Service Provider?
 - b) Is an additional line used for dial-up?
 - c) Price paid for ISP.
 - d) Why no broadband adoption?
 - e) Factors contributing to lack of adoption—cost, computer upgrade needed,
 - f) Lack of broadband availability.
- If not Internet user at home, questions on:
 - » Reasons why:
 - a) Comfort-level with “high technology.”
 - b) Cost of computer.
 - c) Cost of subscription.

III. CONCLUSION

Public Counsel appreciates the opportunity to file these comments. We look forward to participating in the workshop on September 7, 2007, and any future proceedings in this docket.