**Southern Tier West**
**Regional Planning and Development Board**

# County Meeting Report and Recommended Next Steps

## Introduction:

On November 9th and 10th, 2005 meetings were held in Allegany, Cattaraugus, and Chautauqua Counties to discuss issues and opportunities specific to the availability and development of broadband infrastructure and services in the region. Meeting participants included academic, healthcare, enterprise, and government representatives from each of the respective counties.

Each of the County sections contained in this report include the predominant points made by participants during that County's meeting. The points are not placed in any particular order of perceived relevance or importance. They are noted only for general reference. However, they are grouped according to participant group. For example, all academic points are together. Most importantly, this document includes suggested next steps based upon the information obtained.

In addition to the meeting highlights provided, complete audio files for the Allegany and Cattaraugus meetings can be accessed via the project's Teamspace site. To locate these files, go to http://www.tsnyderconsulting.com. Then enter the section for "Clients" and provide your Teamspace username and password. Upon gaining access to the Teamspace site, the audio file folder is in the "Files" section.

If there are any questions or concerns about the information contained in this document please contact Todd E. Snyder at 717-991-7711, or todd@tsnyderconsulting.com.

## Allegany County

### *General Group Points*

- There was overall agreement among the participants with the stated importance of broadband to the region, communities, citizens, businesses and government.
- Participants expressed a willingness to explore group buying options to get more infrastructure and capacity at lower rates.
- Participants expressed a willingness to get organized around the issues, develop shared goals, objectives and messages, and when appropriate reach out to government representatives to secure funding for improvements.
- Participants recognize the need for discussing governmental policy changes to assist in getting infrastructure improvements.

- Participants recognize the pending need to pursue aggressive legislative action to assist with any conceived short- and long-term objectives.
- Participants agreed that "big $$$" is going to be necessary to accomplish long-term goals. Legislators must get involved to secure funding.
- It was noted that often cable and DSL have limited reach within the County – even within the larger communities there is often no service available just outside of town.
- There are still communities without any service options – Angelica was sited as an example. Satellite is the only alternative is those areas.
- It was stated that there is a need for greater awareness / education about broadband and its benefits.
- Participants said that Allegany has unique regional needs and may have to look beyond the three counties served by Southern Tier West for partnerships.
- For dedicated T1 circuits from traditional service providers in the market participants are paying $1,000.00 per month or more.
- Most participants are capitalizing their communications infrastructure and equipment expenses.

### *Government / Economic Development Points*

- It was stated that the lack of broadband technology infrastructure and more competitive services in the region are critical issues needing urgent attention.
- Economic Development clients – both existing businesses and those being recruited to come into the area – are driving the sense of urgency to improve the area's technology infrastructure. "Without it the region is not competitive."
- Having a goal to deliver the best technology available to all businesses and citizens within the County in the next three to five years was mentioned.
- To attract residents to move into the area – and allow for such things as telecommuting – it is as important to plan to reach residential areas as it is to reach business centers.
- E-government is for the most part non-existent across the County.
- There is a lack of government resources because of inefficient local segmentation. "There are too many townships, etc. to be effective."
- Public Safety is a major driver of County government service requirements.
- E-justice is quickly becoming a major driver for County government services, with connections needing to be in place between Albany and the County.

### *Academic Points*

- Local loop challenges and costs were sited as a major concern many times.
- Participants noted that it would be necessary to determine how to manage the local loop challenges in the short-term, while working with legislators to resolve it.
- Quality-of-service and latency issues were sited as major concerns with existing service providers.

- The ability to offer quality distance learning programs has been severely impacted by the QOS and latency issues with existing service providers.
- The inability to connect to NYSERNET (New York State Education & Research Network) was stated to be a major concern.
- There was a concern about the lack of transmission fiber in the area.
- The universities would like to connect to each other to share resources.
- The area Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) were recognized by participants as having the best broadband infrastructure and service capacity in the region.
- The universities are buying between 15 MB and 45 MB of Internet access each month – using fractional T3s.
- BOCES has a 1 Gigabit connection in place between many of its facilities.
- They believe there will never be less of a need for bandwidth than there is today.

### *Healthcare Points*

- The hospital campus is wired with fiber and CAT5.
- The electronic health record initiative is a major driver of advanced services within the healthcare community.
- Radiology and the sharing of images is a major driver within and between hospitals in the area.
- The need for off site transcription work using VPN connections to securely access the hospital's network is also a major driver for advanced services.
- Mobile technology – "care on the go" – both inside a hospital and throughout the rural area is of increasing importance to the healthcare community.
- Using technology to reduce real estate space requirements is important to the hospitals.

## Cattaraugus County

### *General Group Points*

- There was overall agreement among the participants with the stated importance of broadband to the region, communities, citizens, businesses and government.
- Participants expressed a willingness to explore group buying options to get more infrastructure and capacity at lower rates.
- Participants expressed a willingness to get organized around the issues, develop shared goals, objectives and messages, and when appropriate reach out to government representatives to secure funding for improvements.
- Increasing the area's awareness / education of broadband and its benefits are a challenge.  Awareness and education are recognized as keys to any project's success.
- It was stated that it would be great to have a technology expert they could speak to and work with on an as-needed basis for issues and opportunities.

*Government / Economic Development Points*

- Participants recognize the pending need to pursue aggressive legislative action to assist with any conceived short- and long-term objectives.
- In the Olean business park, along Constitution Ave., tenants on one side of the street have access to DSL. On the other side they do not. It's a big issue right now within the economic development office.
- The education of local government representatives was mentioned as important.
- For emergency services mobile communications is very important. EMS would like broadband connectivity to the hospitals from the field.
- Salamanca is willing to invest in a community-wide wireless broadband network using funding from the Casino operation.
- Salamanca would like to use the Internet to market available real estate sites around the Casino. They also mentioned the need for technology infrastructure and services to support these development efforts.
- It was stated that the Seneca Nation of Indians should be directly involved in this initiative.
- The park system is wrestling with the pros and cons of having broadband access available in certain areas for visitor utilization. They are examining wireless solutions.
- The 911 Center uses a fractional T3 for its operation today.

*Academic Points*

- The area Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) were recognized by participants as having the best broadband infrastructure and service capacity in the region.
- Broadband by way of BOCES is having a tremendous, positive impact on K-12 education in the County.
- Student entertainment and instant messaging applications were mentioned as drivers of services across one of the university campuses.
- The university's ability to offer distance learning programs to the community is negatively impacted because of the lack of available broadband technology.
- The lack of more widely available residential broadband access is impacting one university's faculty and staff from telecommuting more effectively.
- It was suggested that a list-serve be established to assist with continued discussion and collaboration among participants.
- There is a Native American College being planned for Salamanca that could use broadband infrastructure and services to enhance its planned community outreach and distance learning capabilities.
- Extending better services to the home for parental participation in a student's educational process is becoming increasingly important to K-12 schools.
- BOCES has a 1 Gigabit connection in place between many of its facilities.
- The universities are buying fractional T3s – 15 MB Internet connections each month.

*Healthcare Points*

- It is believed that the hospitals do not have enough communications capability based on the more difficult demands of providing quality rural healthcare services at a reasonable cost.
- Sharing specialty services between facilities, such as child psychology, would be very beneficial to the healthcare and general community.
- Participants would like to be able to share more information and collaborate but are restricted from doing so because of a lack of access to affordable communications infrastructure and services.
- The human services industry needs help to extend its resources and more effectively collaborate between agencies within the County.  Broadband access and services are considered to be essential to that ever happening.

*Enterprise Points*

- It was stated that tourism brings approx. 2 million people to the area annually.
- Holiday Valley Resort's demand for infrastructure and services is being driven by individual and group customer requests.  Conferences are big business for them and having access to broadband infrastructure and advanced services are critical to their conference business's success.
- To effectively distribute services around its property, Holiday Valley Resort has on-site fiber, plus wireless in its lodge and inn.

## Chautauqua County

*General Group Points*

- There was overall agreement among the participants with the stated importance of broadband to the region, communities, citizens, businesses and government.
- It was agreed that education and awareness are very important – in addition to having the infrastructure and services widely available.
- There are still communities without any service options – Clymer was sited as an example.  No cable, DSL or wireless for the most part – only satellite.
- It was stated that much of the County's cable and DSL communications systems are illogically fragmented.  "There is little consistency."  This was perceived as a big issue.

*Government / Economic Development Points*

- The County has four industrial parks and one under development.  Fiber is available at three of the four current sites.  They are trying to get fiber to the other one, however it has been difficult.

- The County has a large call center complaining about QOS and latency issues of their broadband services. A second call center is being planned and could encounter the same issues.
- The County at one time considered a utility model for the delivery of broadband services to citizens and businesses, however the project was tabled.
- The County Planning and Development Office stated they want to continue to be involved in this initiative.
- It was stated that Jamestown City Hall has a T1. Their fire and police use a private wireless network for most communications.
- GIS is a major driver of broadband service utilization within the county offices.
- The County Planning and Development Office stated that it has a significant demand for services because of the very large engineering documents and CAD files it must process electronically for clients.
- The County Planning and Development Office also stated that more and more, potential developers for their commercial sites require everything to be created and communicated electronically. As a result, broadband is without question a necessity for their office to function, be productive, and show potential businesses they "have what it takes" to accommodate tenants' technology needs.
- The high prices for dedicated broadband access services in the area – and a lack of competition for dedicated services – are perceived as problematic when trying to attract potential businesses to the area.
- It was stated that E-government is for the most part non-existent. Where it has been attempted, there is always a lack of resources available to properly maintain the sites and information.
- Jamestown has just revamped its website on a large scale.
- There are increasing state requirements to move information electronically from the Counties to the state, but little state support is offered to accomplish the objectives – financially or otherwise.

*Academic Points*

- The area Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) were recognized by participants as having the best broadband infrastructure and service capacity in the region.
- Broadband capabilities are having a tremendous, positive impact on K-12 education in the County as a result of the BOCES network.
- It was stated that broadband infrastructure and services are key to helping to make a rural school as competitive as possible – hence ensuring the students are well prepared.
- It was mentioned that some school districts are using distance learning quite effectively, while others have had to stop programs because of inflating monthly service costs. Chautauqua Lake School District was noted as one that stopped.
- Distance learning and video conferencing services are applications that they would like to expand.