

Left to Corporate Decision Makers, Internet Improvements Move Slowly in EUP

Internet: From page 1

speed providers.

"Our systems are pretty well set," he said. "For there to be further expansion of our system would require engineering studies and surveys to see if there is sufficient interest, and if it's economical."

Geographic isolation, low population, and availability of technology are why infrastructure improvements in the EUP continue to move at such a slow pace, he said.

To upgrade low-population areas in the EUP would require an almost complete overhaul of the current cable infrastructure, said Tim Ransberger, vice president of government relations in Michigan for Charter Communications. It likely would even entail installing new cable to each home.

"There's a lot of work involved and it's very expensive," he said. "The amount of money it would cost to upgrade a community is pretty large. We can afford to upgrade where you have areas of a larger density population."

Mr. Ransberger said Charter has no plans to make such upgrades in the foreseeable future.

Sunrise, however, does plan to enhance services and offerings to its current coverage areas this summer, Mr. Goodenow said. The company provides cable television and high-speed Internet to Cedarville, Hessel, Drummond Island, and Pickford areas in the EUP, and to Atlanta, Hillman, Mullett Lake, Onaway, and Posen areas in the northern Lower Peninsula. Sunrise was cre-

ated when it took control of the Northwoods Cable system after that company went bankrupt in 2007.

It will be several years before high-speed Internet access will be available throughout the EUP, predicts Jeff Hagen, executive director of the Eastern Upper Peninsula Regional Planning and Development Commission.

"I'm hopeful it will be within 10 years or less," he said. "I'm optimistic. I think it can be done, but it has to be put in the right light."

Making the necessary infrastructure upgrades in low-population areas is mostly up to the service providers, he said.

Several years ago, the Regional Planning and Development Commission represented the EUP on a committee that conducted a study of where broadband service was needed in the area. About six months after the study was completed, Mr. Hagen said, the study was considered "obsolete" because bigger providers "rolled out their residential high-speed programs" to more populated areas, like St. Ignace and Sault Ste. Marie.

His agency is not advocating for any broadband infrastructure improvements at this time, Mr. Hagen said.

Amy Grundman, spokesperson for AT&T, said, the company "remains focused on delivering broadband to as many customers as possible. We are always looking for ways to keep more Michigan residents connected."

She did not say AT&T has any plans to improve its high-speed services to low-population areas in the EUP.

Many Businesses and Homes in EUP Want Access to High Speed Internet

As high-speed Internet access becomes more and more a necessity in the digital age, many businesses and homes are crying out for its availability in this region.

Mr. Hagen said many businesses in smaller communities in the EUP would like to have high-speed access, but are limited to what is provided by private companies, while the public schools and many government agencies are "pretty well covered" with high-speed connections, he said.

All schools in the EUP are supplied with T1 high-speed lines, said Pete Everson, superintendent of the Eastern Upper Peninsula Intermediate School District (ISD).

"The perception is that we're very rural, we're very far apart. We need to make sure we have access to the world of information. We need to make sure we have that available to our kids and teachers here," Mr. Everson said.

The high-speed lines supplied to the schools are not reserved strictly for the schools, he said, and could be fed to the surrounding areas. The ISD was meeting with counties, cities, and townships several years ago about providing access to those high-speed lines, but some schools were reluctant to allow

access, he said, fearing doing so would degrade their own service.

Tim Maylone of Cherry Capital Connections, a telecommunications provider in Elk Rapids with service in St. Ignace and Mackinaw City and on Mackinac Island, said T1 lines are typically rated at 1.5 Megabits per second, half of what is now considered minimum broadband, and concurred that the schools should not provide public access to their high-speed lines.

Regardless, Mr. Everson believes high-speed access in the digital age is important to everyone in the EUP.

"It's important to every business, every person in business, especially if they're working for themselves," he said. "I don't think there's anyone that couldn't make use of high-speed Internet in some way."

Mr. Maylone said he supplies high-speed wireless connections to the Michigan National Guard in Sault Ste. Marie via Charter-owned fiber optic lines fed to the Tower of History. The fiber optic lines, which run between Sault Ste. Marie and Grayling, also supply high-speed access to over 60 customers almost as far south as St. Ignace.

EUP residents looking for ways to get around waiting for private enterprise to build the necessary infrastructure can look to the sky, to satellite connectivity.

Lighthouse Computers is connecting homes to the Internet using high-speed satellite connections, which are available everywhere in the EUP.

Agristar Global Network also provides high-speed satellite access to rural communities, but on a much larger scale. The Chicago-based communications company was originally designed to connect agricultural businesses to the Internet, but has expanded to provide service to rural communities across the U.S.

Another type of high-speed access, called broadband over power lines (BPL), is in the experimental stages. The experimental technology is able to connect to the Internet through existing power lines at speeds comparable to DSL and cable connections.

BPL developers have created a way to send data over power lines using radio, wireless networking, and modem technological principles, and are working with power companies and Internet providers in select U.S. cities to slightly modify current power grids to test the technology.

But the least costly way for consumers to increase high-speed avail-

ability is to create a demand for it through contact with service providers and state legislatures. Asking government agencies for improved service will likely expedite programs aimed at connecting rural and low-population areas.

In Washington, D.C., a nonprofit organization called Connected Nation is working with Kentucky, Minnesota, Ohio, Tennessee, and West Virginia state governments to expand broadband coverage to all parts of those states through public-private partnerships.

Connected Nation works with community leaders to pinpoint underserved areas and implement programs to provide high-speed access to those areas.

In Massachusetts, Governor Deval Patrick signed a bill last August to help supply broadband service to 32 rural communities without high-speed access and 63 with partial access within three years. The bill created the Massachusetts Broadband Institute and will provide \$40 million in bonds to roll out high-speed services in that state.

On a national level, \$6 billion is expected to be earmarked in the an \$825 billion economic stimulus package expected to be approved this week, including \$3 billion from the House Energy and Commerce Committee to expand internet service and an additional \$3 billion from the House Agriculture Committee to expand broadband service in rural areas.

State budget shortfall takes out group working for rural access improvements

Closer to home, the Rural Broadband Initiative was created to bring high-speed Internet access to rural and underserved areas through the Michigan Broadband Development Authority (MBDA), which combined loans with federal grant money to broadband providers to invest in underserved regions of Michigan. The Authority was created in 2002 to help attract private investments in high-speed infrastructure and increase demand for broadband services; unfortunately for the EUP, however, the Authority was shut down in April 2007 when hit by state budget short-

Chris LaGrand, former director of legal affairs for the Authority and current director of legal affairs for the Michigan State Housing

Contacting Legislators

Those concerned about rural access to high-speed Internet may want to contact their lawmakers at the following addresses:

Senator Jason Allen
P.O. Box 30036
Lansing, MI 48909-7536
senjallen@senate.michigan.gov
(517) 373-2413

Representative Gary McDowell
S1486 House Office Building
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909-7514
garymcdowell@house.mi.gov
Phone: 517-373-2629

Congressman Bart Stupak
2352 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
Phone: 202-225-4735

Development Authority, said before the Authority was shut down, it was in talks with regional Internet, cable, and phone providers working to bring high-speed access to areas of the EUP.

"Just because there's one service provider in an area, doesn't mean you've got coverage," Mr. LaGrand said. "When you've got a real rural area, you've got to find ways to serve the real rural customer. A lot of what we believed as the MBDA's role was to fill in those gaps."

The Authority helped several regions in Michigan acquire dollars to increase high-speed access, including \$6 million in Muskegon County, \$5.6 million in Bay, Saginaw, Midland, Tuscola, Isabella, Presque Isle, Grand Traverse, Leelanau, Kalkaska, Antrim, and Emmett counties, and \$576,000 in Lake and Oceana counties. More than \$30 million in bonds and loans were procured through the Authority during its existence.

There is no legislation currently before Michigan lawmakers dealing with bringing such technology to rural areas here, State Senator Jason Allen told *The St. Ignace News*.

Cedarville, Engadine, Rudyard Schools Recognized

Schools: From page 1

biology, AP calculus, AP government, and AP chemistry, and hopes to add more in the next few years.

Stu Hobbs, superintendent of Engadine Schools, said two college-ready courses are available to students on-site, and students there also take courses available through MVHS.

"Today bronze, tomorrow the silver or gold," Mr. Hobbs said.

Mr. Pavloski is excited to be recognized by the national publication.

"It's really nice to see your name in print," he said. "Positive PR in this day and age is so good, and I think that this is a feather in our cap

as well as our students'."

Mrs. Scott, who thinks it's "very cool" to be recognized for a second year, said the recognition speaks to her school's high level of education, despite its current budget problems.

"Good programming doesn't always take high finance," she said. "It takes thought and it takes the best people to think outside the box. To think about what 21st century learning skills we want our students to possess when they walk out the door here."

Les Cheneaux Community Schools has a projected revenue deficit of \$99,000. A community action group of concerned parents,

teachers, and residents is trying to raise enough money in the "Fund the Future" campaign to combat the projected deficit, and increase student enrollment.

Of the 1,208 high schools recognized, half received bronze honors, while 504 received silver, and 100 received gold. Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology in Alexandria, Virginia, was recognized as the best high school in the U.S. for the second year in a row, out of the 21,069 schools analyzed in 48 states.

A complete list of high schools recognized and details of methods to rank each school is available at www.usnews.com/highschools.

Public Health Programs Add to Life Expectancy Rates

LMAS: From page 3

counseling, immunization, hearing and vision screening, and alcohol and drug screening.

Environmental services offered at the health department include food service inspections and permits, well water evaluation and permits, well water test kits, and on-site sewage evaluations and permits.

Home health services include skilled nursing services, diabetic training, home health aide services, physical therapy, speech therapy, and occupational therapy.

New for the health department, if a grant is approved, would be testing for E-coli counts on any public beaches within the LMAS four-county service area. Also, more educational seminars will be available, he said. Now, Medical Director Dr. James Terrian is offer-

ing a program on shingles and the availability of a vaccine.

In the last century, the average life expectancy of an American has increased from 46 years old to 75 years old. Diseases used to sweep families, communities, and the country. Not all of the disease have been eliminated, but through public health, they have been controlled.

Twenty-five of those increased life expectancy years have been directly attributed to public health programs, including immunization, prevention, clean drinking water, and nutrition, said Mr. Schoenborn.

"If anyone doesn't think those numbers are impressive," Mr. Schoenborn said, "they need to do some reading about public health."

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