

REGIONAL DISTRICT OF BULKLEY-NECHAKO

**CONNECTIVITY COMMITTEE
AGENDA
Thursday, June 10, 2021**

<u>PAGE NO.</u>		<u>ACTION</u>
	<u>AGENDA- June 10, 2021</u>	Approve
	<u>Supplementary Agenda</u>	Receive
	<u>MINUTES</u>	
2-3	Connectivity Committee Meeting Minutes - April 8, 2021	Approve
	<u>REPORTS</u>	
4- 8	Cheryl Anderson, Director of Corporate Services/ John Illes, Director of Finance – Regional Broadband Infrastructure Service Establishment	Recommendation
9 -11	Nellie Davis, Manager of Regional Economic Development – RDBN Connectivity Strategy Discussion	Discussion
12-13	Nellie Davis, Manager of Regional Economic Development – Alternative Connectivity Funding Considerations	Discussion
14-16	Nellie Davis, Manager of Regional Economic Development – Grant Application Advocacy	Receive
17	Nellie Davis, Manager of Regional Economic Development – Internet Speed Test Study Update	Receive
	<u>SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA</u>	
	<u>NEW BUSINESS</u>	
	<u>ADJOURNMENT</u>	

REGIONAL DISTRICT OF BULKLEY-NECHAKO**CONNECTIVITY COMMITTEE MEETING****(VIRTUAL)****Thursday, April 8, 2021**

PRESENT: Chair Michael Riis-Christianson

Directors Tom Greenaway
Clint Lambert
Chris Newell
Mark Parker
Gerry Thiessen

Staff Curtis Helgesen, Chief Administrative Officer
Cheryl Anderson, Manager of Administrative Services
Nellie Davis, Manager of Regional Economic Development
John Illes, Chief Financial Officer
Wendy Wainwright, Executive Assistant

Others Chris Armstrong, Director of Sales & Marketing, CityWest
Bart Kuntz, Vice President, Outside Plant, CityWest
Mark Fisher, Electoral Area "A" (Smithers Rural)
Aarushi Jain, Project Manager, CityWest
Linda McGuire, Village of Granisle
Bob Motion, District of Fort St. James
Jerry Petersen, Electoral Area "F" (Vanderhoof Rural)
Mike Pilon, Director of Projects, CityWest
Sarrah Storey, Village of Fraser Lake
Stefan Woloszyn, CEO, CityWest

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Riis-Christianson called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

AGENDAMoved by Director Lambert
Seconded by Director Newell**BBC.2021-2-1**

"That the Connectivity Committee Agenda for April 8, 2021 be approved as amended to withdraw the Delegation."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**MINUTES****Broadband Committee
Meeting Minutes
–January 14, 2021**Moved by Director Lambert
Seconded by Director Greenaway**BBC.2021-2-2**

"That the Broadband Committee Meeting Minutes of January 14, 2021 be approved."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

DISCUSSION ITEM

Union of B.C. Municipalities Internet Speed Study

Chair Riis-Christianson spoke of collating federal mapping with the RDBN CIRA speed test data collected. Nellie Davis, Manager of Regional Economic Development noted that staff are reviewing the mapping and will be self-registering to ensure that municipalities and rural areas are included in the evaluation of the federal mapping that is being undertaken by UBCM.

CAO Helgesen mentioned that staff discussed with CityWest the mapping concerns and will also be reviewing the information and collaborating with the RDBN moving forward.

CORRESPONDENCE

Discussion took place in regard to the expansion of wireless connectivity to routes connected to the Highway 16 corridor.

Wireless Connectivity
 Improvements in the Regional
 District of Bulkley-Nechako

Moved by Director Lambert
 Seconded by Director Greenaway

BBC.2021-2-3

“That the Connectivity Committee recommend that the Board write a letter to the Ministry of Citizens’ Services requesting expansion of wireless connectivity to the Southside of Francois Lake, Highway 118 and Highway 27 as connector routes to the Highway 16 (‘Highway of Tears’) route.”

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Director Greenaway
 Seconded by Director Lambert

BBC.2021-2-4

“That the meeting be adjourned at 9:07 a.m.”

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Michael Riis-Christianson, Chair

Wendy Wainwright, Executive Assistant



REGIONAL DISTRICT OF BULKLEY-NECHAKO

MEMORANDUM

TO: Chair Riis-Christianson and Committee

FROM: Cheryl Anderson, Director of Corporate Services/John Illes, Director of Finance

DATE: June 10, 2021

SUBJECT: Regional Broadband Infrastructure Service Establishment

RECOMMENDATION: (all/directors/majority)

That the Committee recommend that the Board approve the Alternative Approval Process (AAP) for elector assent for the Regional Broadband infrastructure Service Bylaw.

Further, that the Regional Broadband Infrastructure Service Bylaw be presented to the Board on June 24, 2021 for first and second readings.

BACKGROUND

Attached is a Regional Broadband Infrastructure Service Establishing Bylaw that includes the entire Regional District. Adoption of the bylaw is the next step required to move forward with the Partnership Agreement with CityWest.

Each service that is established must be allocated the appropriate staff time and administration and legal costs for the service to operate including the operation of the Connectivity Committee. In a review of the proposed service, it is estimated that the costs to establish and develop this service will be about \$40,000 in the first year (this includes costs to establish the service through the alternative approval process as well as legal costs to develop partnership agreements). These costs are 6/10 cent per \$1,000 of assessment. After establishment, administration costs are expected to fall to 1/4 cent per \$1,000. For example, a \$500,000 property will be expected to pay a total of \$3.00 for this service in the first year and \$1.25 total for this service thereafter.

The following is an outline of the proposed steps and timeline for the bylaw and the AAP:

Schedule	Action
June 24, 2021	Board gives 1 st and 2 nd Reading to Bylaw
June 25 – July 30, 2021	Bylaw is forwarded to municipalities to confirm participation in service
August 12, 2021	Board gives 3 rd Reading to Bylaw (as amended if necessary)
August 13, 2021	Certified Bylaw is sent to municipalities for formal approval
September 17, 2021	Deadline for municipal approvals
September 18, 2021	Bylaw is forwarded to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs for approval
September 23, 2021	Board establishes elector response form, elector response deadline, and determines total number of electors for AAP
October 27, 2021	First publication of AAP notice
November 3, 2021	Second publication of AAP notice
December 3, 2021	Deadline for AAP responses
December 16, 2021	If elector approval is received, Board adopts bylaw

REGIONAL DISTRICT OF BULKLEY-NECHAKO**BYLAW NO. 1951****A bylaw to establish a service for providing broadband infrastructure throughout the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako**

WHEREAS Regional District may, pursuant to the *Local Government Act*, operate any service that it considers necessary or desirable for all or part of the Regional District;

AND WHEREAS the Regional Board wishes to establish a service for providing broadband and infrastructure for communities within the Regional District;

AND WHEREAS participating area approval has been obtained in accordance with the *Local Government Act*;

NOW THEREFORE, the Regional Board of the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako, in open meeting assembled, enacts as follows:

Service Established

1. There is hereby established a service to be known as the “Regional Broadband Infrastructure Service.”

Definition

2. In this bylaw, unless the context otherwise requires, “**broadband infrastructure**” means infrastructure that supports or enables access to high-speed internet and other communication or telecommunication networks.

Service Described

3. The service hereby established includes the design, development, construction, operation and maintenance of broadband infrastructure within the service area.

Boundaries

4. The boundaries of the service area include the entirety of the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako.

Participating Areas

- 5. The participating areas are the Town of Smithers, District of Houston, District of Vanderhoof, Village of Burns Lake, Village of Fraser Lake, District of Fort St. James, Village of Telkwa, Village of Granisle, Electoral Areas A (Smithers Rural), B (Burns Lake Rural), C (Fort St. James Rural), D (Fraser Lake Rural), E (Francois Ootsa Lake Rural), F (Vanderhoof Rural), and G (Houston Rural).

Cost Recovery

- 6. The annual cost of operating the service shall be recovered by one or more of the following methods:
 - a. Property value taxes imposed in accordance with Division 4.3 of Part 24 of the *Local Government Act*;
 - b. Revenues received by way of agreement, enterprise, gift, grant or otherwise;
 - c. Revenues raised by other means authorized by the *Local Government Act* or another act.

Requisition

- 7. The maximum amount that may be requisitioned annually for the service is the equivalent of \$0.01 per \$1,000 of the net taxable value of land and improvements in the service area.

Apportionment

- 8. The cost of the Service shall be apportioned among the Participating Areas on the basis of the converted value of land and improvements in the service area.

Citation

- 9. This bylaw may be cited for all purposes as “Regional Broadband Infrastructure Service Establishing Bylaw No. 1951, 2021.”

READ A FIRST TIME this day of , 2021

READ A SECOND TIME this day of , 2021

READ A THIRD TIME this day of , 2021

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of “Regional Broadband Infrastructure Service Establishing Bylaw No. 1951, 2021” at third reading.

Corporate Administrator

APPROVED BY THE INSPECTOR OF MUNICIPALITIES this day of
, 2021

APPROVAL OF THE ELECTORS RECEIVED ON THE DAY OF
, 2021

ADOPTED this day of , 2021.

Chairperson

Corporate Administrator

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true copy of Bylaw No. 1951 as adopted.

Corporate Administrator



Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Connectivity Committee Memorandum

To: Chair Riis-Christianson and Committee
From: Nellie Davis, Manager of Regional Economic Development
Date: June 10, 2021
Regarding: **RDBN Connectivity Strategy Discussion**

Recommendation:

Discussion.

Background:

Ongoing work of the Connectivity Committee includes the development and implementation of a Regional Connectivity Strategy. This document should outline the RDBN's vision, goals, and plan to support the provision of reliable, affordable broadband and cellular connectivity across the region.

Following recommendations from the TANEX Engineering Report commissioned in 2019, many of the applicable steps that were outlined have been undertaken and/or continue to be addressed in the developing partnership with CityWest.

The remaining steps include the RDBN creating a strategy document that reflects our plans moving forward and outlines how we plan to ensure all residents have access to this essential service. The plan should serve as a framework, while remaining a living document that can be referred to and amended as new information and/or opportunities become available.

Staff have included preliminary strategy creation notes for discussion and seek additional thoughts, inclusions, or edits.

Vision: That all citizens in the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako (RDBN) will have access to High-Speed Internet

Commitments - That the RDBN will:

- 1) Pursue connectivity solutions that are reliable, affordable and that meet or exceed the recognized minimum standard of service (currently 50Mbps download and 10Mbps upload).
- 2) Advocate for Fibre to the Home solutions wherever possible, and wireless or alternative technology solutions where a fibre solution is prohibitively expensive.
- 3) Actively pursue connectivity solutions, in the order prioritized by the Board, until all citizens have access to cellular and broadband service.
- 4) Include partners, Staff and Directors in the process of project development in a collaborative manner.
- 5) Communicate and collaborate with First Nations partners to pursue partnerships where applicable to ensure all residents have access to service.

Goals:

- 1) That the RDBN will develop partnerships to ensure technical expertise is a key component in project development.
- 2) That the RDBN will, in partnership, pursue grant opportunities for connectivity infrastructure.
- 3) To work with applicable agencies to ensure accurate mapping of broadband service delivery levels to enable grant eligibility.
- 4) To work with applicable agencies to correct inaccurate home count data to support grant applications.

Funding Mechanism:

The RDBN, in partnership with CityWest, will first and foremost pursue grant funding from senior levels of government for connectivity infrastructure.

Alternative funding mechanisms will be investigated at the direction of the Board and will be included in this document should they receive Board approval for consideration. Those mechanisms may be considered on a project-specific basis, and not for the Region as a whole.

Strategy:

Due to the geographic scope, project development will be approached by Electoral Area. Projects will be identified initially by broad geographic description, and service area boundaries will be determined in collaboration with partners with technical expertise. Due to the competitive and sensitive nature of the grant application process, early and middle stages of project development may not be shared publicly.

This strategy is meant to be a living document that evolves with information and over time. Project priorities may change without public notice as a result of funding opportunities, awards granted to other entities not in partnership with the RDBN, or other factors unknown at this time. In many cases, project priority order will be determined by a sequential approach to building upon existing infrastructure.

Electoral Area A Priority Projects:

- Lower Hudson Bay Road
- Upper Viewmont
- Coalmine Road
- Raceway Road / Jane Haven Road / Nouch Frontage Road Area
- Tyee Lake Loop

Electoral Area B Priority Projects:

- Highway 35 to Area E boundary and Eagle Creek
- Tintagel
- Highway 16 to Decker Lake and Wet'suwet'en
- Palling

Electoral Area C Priority Projects:

- Sowchea Bay Road Area
- Mt Pope Area
- Necoslie Road Area

Electoral Area D Priority Projects:

- East End Francois Lake
- Fort Fraser
- Lily Lake Road Area
- Telegraph Road Area
- Endako
- Savory Rd Area

Electoral Area E Priority Projects:

- Hwy 35 to Francois Lake
- Tchesinkut Lake Road Area
- North Shore Francois Lake
- Southbank and Grassy Plains Area
- Tatalrose Rd Area
- Uncha Lake Area
- Takysie Lake Area
- Ootsa Lake and Wisteria Area

Electoral Area F Priority Projects:

- Cluculz Lake Area
- Sturgeon Point Road Area
- Sackner Road Area
- Prariedale Area
- Braeside Area
- Mooney Pit Road Area

Electoral Area G Priority Projects:

- Buck Flats
- Mountainview Dr / Vanderplog Rd / Hazel Rd Area
- Topley
- Teer Road / Bold Rd / Harding Road Area
- Perow



Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Connectivity Committee Memorandum

To: Chair Riis-Christianson and Committee
 From: Nellie Davis, Manager of Regional Economic Development
 Date: June 10, 2021
 Regarding: **Alternative Connectivity Funding Considerations**

Recommendation:

Discussion.

Background:

The RDBN Connectivity Strategy (under development) prioritizes applications for grant funding as the best option for funding connectivity infrastructure. However, there are some cases where grant funding opportunities will not be available. These include:

- 1) Project areas where Provincial and/or Federal eligibility mapping indicates the area is not eligible for infrastructure funding.
- 2) Project areas where the population density or geographical considerations for construction mean that the project budget is unlikely to be successful in a competitive grant application process.

In these cases, in order to achieve our shared 'no home left behind' partnership philosophy, alternate infrastructure or funding options will need to be considered. Some of these options include:

- A. Considering alternate technology to reduce project costs (where possible)
- B. Mobilizing community contributions to project elements, such as donations of cost-recovery wages for machine time for construction.
- C. Considering an alternate funding model made possible through changes to the Local Government Act:

Exception for assistance in relation to utilities, mountain resorts or high-speed internet services

275 (1) Despite section 273, a regional district may operate the service of

- (a) providing capital financing for services provided by a telephone, natural gas or electric power utility,
- (b) the giving of grants to an applicant for a business promotion scheme under section 215 [*business improvement areas*] of the *Community Charter* in relation to a mountain resort, or
- (c) providing capital financing for high-speed internet service to an area without access to high-speed internet service.

(2) In this section, "high-speed internet service" has the meaning prescribed by regulation.

BC Regulation 95/2019 – HIGH-SPEED INTERNET SERVICE REGULATION states:

Definition of "high-speed internet service"

1 For the purposes of section 275 of the *Local Government Act*, "high-speed internet service" means an internet service that provides to subscribers access speeds of

(a) at least 50 megabits per second download, and

(b) at least 10 megabits per second upload.

The exception listed above makes it possible for Local Governments to borrow from MFA and contribute the funding to a third party (where a partnering agreement exists) for the purpose of financing capital costs for high-speed internet service for areas where high-speed service is not available.

This option could be utilized by the RDBN in partnership with CityWest to fund connectivity infrastructure in communities that are not served at 50/10Mbps, and for where the project budget would not likely receive approval in a competitive grant program. Under this model, RDBN would borrow through MFA and, through an Indebtedness and Project Description Agreement, CityWest would provide full reimbursement of all costs incurred by the Regional District with respect to such borrowing, including annual principal and interest payments over the life of the debt.

This option may also be useful for member municipalities upon completion of the Internet Speed Study currently underway, which aims to demonstrate the inaccuracy of federal mapping. This data could be used to make a case for borrowing for areas considered 'served' according to federal mapping.



Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Connectivity Committee Memorandum

To: Chair Riis-Christianson and Committee
 From: Nellie Davis, Manager of Regional Economic Development
 Date: June 10, 2021
 Regarding: **Grant Application Advocacy**

Recommendation:

Receive.

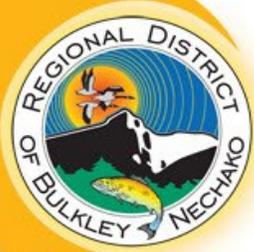
Background:

Chair Thiessen, Connectivity Committee Chair Riis-Christianson and staff have been advocating on behalf of grant applications for RDBN projects submitted by CityWest with Federal and Provincial representatives. A sample letter is attached for your information.

In addition to letters, in-person calls are also being scheduled to ensure Elected Officials at all levels of government are aware of our unique partnership opportunity and the important projects under consideration with the Connecting British Columbia and Universal Broadband Fund programs.

Rural Directors are welcome to pursue additional opportunities to advocate for project(s) in their area by contacting the appropriate MLA and MP for your area. Contact information is provided below.

First Name	Last Name	Title	Organization	Email	Phone
Garth	Frizzell	President	FCM	garth.frizzell@princegeorge.ca	778-349-5322
Brian	Frenkel	President	UBCM	bfrenkel13@gmail.com	250-567-4711
Taylor	Bachrach	MP	Skeena-Bulkley Valley	Taylor.Bachrach@parl.gc.ca	250-877-4140
Todd	Doherty	MP	Cariboo-Prince George	Todd.Doherty@parl.gc.ca	250-564-7771
Nathan	Cullen	MLA	Stikine	nathan.cullen.MLA@leg.bc.ca	250-842-6338
John	Rustad	MLA	Nechako Lakes	John.Rustad.MLA@leg.bc.ca	250-567-6820
Lisa	Beare	Minister	Citizen's Services - Province of BC	CITZ.Minister@gov.bc.ca	250-387-9699



37, 3RD AVE PO Box 820
 BURNS LAKE, BC
 VOJ 1E0

REGIONAL DISTRICT
 OF BULKLEY-NECHAKO
 "A WORLD OF OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN OUR REGION"

May 14, 2021

Garth Frizzell
 President, FCM
 24 Clarence Street
 Ottawa, ON K1N 5P3

Dear Garth,

As you are aware, rural communities in Northern BC are woefully ill-served when it comes to broadband connectivity. As such, local governments across the province are swiftly learning about the required infrastructure and exploring avenues for participation in the provision of this essential service.

The Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako (RDBN) has dedicated significant resources to the above research, as we gain a better understanding of the actual (not ISP reported) experience of our residents when it comes to broadband service. This research has identified several areas of concern with the current structures in place to support the delivery of this service through public funding.

The RDBN, after much research, engagement, and advocacy, is pleased to be announcing a partnership we hope will bring swift change to the broadband landscape in our region. ([Read Press Release Here](#)) We believe this partnership with CityWest, a wholly municipally owned ISP, is key to addressing connectivity challenges in our region while ensuring investments flow back to the communities we live and serve in.

We would love to invite you to meet virtually with our Connectivity Committee Chair and RDBN staff to learn about our unique partnership model and to request your support for applications for projects in our region. Your support is necessary in the long-term to see rural residents served, and is particularly important in the short-term as it applies to applications currently under review with the Universal Broadband Fund and the Connecting British Columbia Program. Your interest in and vocal support for these projects is critical to the success of these applications. The proposed projects have been developed in partnership by the RDBN and CityWest and represent the mandatory investment in foundational infrastructure required to deliver reliable, affordable high-speed internet throughout the region.

The Table below provides information about submitted projects and their associated funding request from all levels of government. These projects represent the first phase of our long-term goal to reach all residents with access to connectivity solutions. Approval for these projects would create the ability for incremental builds to expand service areas.

MUNICIPALITIES:

SMITHERS FT. ST. JAMES
 VANDERHOOF FRASER LAKE
 HOUSTON TELKWA
 BURNS LAKE GRANISLE

ELECTORAL AREAS:

A-SMITHERS RURAL F-VANDERHOOF RURAL
 B-BURNS LAKE RURAL E-FRANCOIS & OOSTA LAKES
 C-FORT ST. JAMES RURAL G-HOUSTON RURAL
 D-FRASER LAKE RURAL

Location	Requested Contributions			
	RDBN	Federal	Provincial	CityWest
Connecting Burns Lake - Francois Lake	10%	50%	25%	15%
Connecting Cluculz Lake	10%	50%	25%	15%
Connecting Decker Lake	10%	50%	25%	15%
Connecting Fort St. James	10%	50%	25%	15%
Connecting Smithers - Hudson	10%	50%	25%	15%
Connecting Smithers – Upper Viewmont	10%	50%	25%	15%
Connecting Southbank - Francois Lake	10%	50%	25%	15%

We would be happy to set up a meeting at your convenience. Please feel free to contact Nellie Davis, Manager of Regional Economic Development at 250-692-3195 or via email at nellie.davis@rdbn.bc.ca to communicate your availability and we will arrange a meeting to suit your schedule.

Thank you very much,



Gerry Thiessen
RDBN Board Chair



Michael Riis-Christianson
RDBN Connectivity Committee Chair



Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Connectivity Committee Memorandum

To: Chair Riis-Christianson and Committee
From: Nellie Davis, Manager of Regional Economic Development
Date: June 10, 2021
Regarding: **Internet Speed Test Study Update**

Recommendation:

Receive.

Background:

TANEx Engineering Corporation (TANEx) has been contracted to complete the Internet Speed Study, commissioned by the Northern Development Initiative Trust, the Union of British Columbia Municipalities and the British Columbia Ministry of Citizens' Services. The study focuses on identifying and quantifying geographic areas in BC where the Government of Canada National Broadband Internet Service Availability Map (ISED map) indicates that those locations have internet service available to them at 50 megabits per second download and 10 megabits per second upload (50/10), but users from that geographic area do not experience internet service at 50/10Mbps level.

This work is currently underway with participating local governments reporting areas with known data errors, as well as encouraging additional data collection through the CIRA Internet Performance Test. It is anticipated that the study will be complete in August 2021.