REGIONAL DISTRICT OF BULKLEY-NECHAKO

CONNECTIVITY COMMITTEE
AGENDA
Thursday, February 10, 2022

PAGE NO.		ACTION
	AGENDA- February 10, 2022	Approve
	Supplementary Agenda	Receive
	MINUTES	
2-4	Connectivity Committee Meeting Minutes - October 7, 2021	Approve
	REPORTS	
5-7	Nellie Davis, Manager of Regional Economic Development – Prioritization Criteria Metrics	Discussion

VERBAL REPORTS

Chair Riis-Christianson – Update

Nellie Davis, Manager of Regional Economic Development - Introductory Meeting with Rogers

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

NEW BUSINESS

IN-CAMERA MOTION

In accordance with Section 90 of the Community Charter, it is the opinion of the Committee that matters pertaining to Section 90(2)(b) – the consideration of information received and held in confidence relating to negotiations between the municipality and a provincial government or the federal government or both, or between a provincial government or the federal government or both and a third party (Connectivity), must be closed to the public, therefore exercise their option of excluding the public for this meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

REGIONAL DISTRICT OF BULKLEY-NECHAKO

CONNECTIVITY COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, October 7, 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, Director of Corporate Services Nellie Davis, Manager of Regional Economic Development John Illes, Chief Financial Officer Wendy Wainwright, Executive Assistant/Recording Secretary
	Others	Linda McGuire, Village of Granisle – arrived at 9:26 a.m. Annette Morgan, Village of Telkwa Bob Motion, District of Fort St. James – via Zoom Jerry Petersen, Electoral Area "F" (Vanderhoof Rural) – arrived at 9:45 a.m.

CALL TO ORDER   Chair Riis-Christianson called the meeting to order at 9:15 a.m.

AGENDA   Moved by Director Newell
          Seconded by Director Lambert

BBC.2021-4-1   "That the Connectivity Committee Agenda for October 7, 2021 be approved."

          (All/Directors/Majority)   CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

MINUTES

Broadband Committee   Moved by Director Lambert
Meeting Minutes   Seconded by Director Greenaway
–June 10, 2021

BBC.2021-4-2   "That the Broadband Committee Meeting Minutes of June 10, 2021 be approved."

          (All/Directors/Majority)   CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

REPORTS

RDBN Connectivity Funding   Moved by Director Greenaway
Strategy Discussion   Seconded by Director Lambert

BBC.2021-4-3   "That the Connectivity Committee receive the Manager of Economic Development's RDBN Connectivity Funding Strategy Discussion memorandum."

          (All/Directors/Majority)   CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

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REPORTS (CONT'D)

Discussion took place regarding the following:
- CityWest first right of refusal for all proposed transport and last-mile fibre projects
- Finalizing the Partnership Agreement with CityWest
- Pursuing connectivity solutions along Highway 16
- Prioritization strategy
   o Analytical approach
   o Decisions require Director's input
   o Investigating options to bring connectivity to areas where it is identified as cost prohibitive
      ▪ Combining cost prohibitive areas with areas that are more affordable
- Determine costing
- Revenue sources beyond taxation
- Rely on partnerships
- Follow up meeting with the Honourable Lisa Beare, Minister of Citizens' Services
   o Indicated favour towards partnerships
- Telecoms plans for the region
   o Knowing existing infrastructure and proposed infrastructure
   o Assist in directing project focus and priority
   o Staff will follow up with grant program providers and Ministry of Citizens' Service to determine post application information availability
- Starlink.

Regional Service Establishment Communication Update

Moved by Director Lambert
Seconded by Director Newell

BBC.2021-4-4

"That the Connectivity Committee receive the Manager of Economic Development's Regional Service Establishment Communication Update."

(All/Directors/Majority)   CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Chair Riis-Christianson spoke of developing communication that, at the discretion of Directors, could be shared and utilized to communicate with area residents recognizing that not everyone has access to web-based communication information.

The following was discussed:
- Communication language
- Methods of communication
   o Community boards
   o Newspapers
   o Other
- Alternative Approval Process (AAP) includes two advertisements in each of the region's newspapers.

CORRESPONDENCE

<u>The Honourable Lisa Beare,
Minister of Citizens' Services
-Response to RDBN Letter Re:
Provincial Funding Timelines for
Applications submitted on behalf
of RDBN by CityWest</u>

Moved by Director Parker
Seconded by Director Greenaway

<u>BBC.2021-4-5</u>

"That the Connectivity Committee receive the correspondence from the Honourable Lisa, Beare, Minister of Citizens' Services Response to RDBN Letter Re: Provincial Funding Timelines for Applications submitted on behalf of RDBN by CityWest."

(All/Directors/Majority)   <u>CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY</u>

Conversation took place regarding:
- Number of areas in the region that fibre and wireless options are not accessible
- Low orbit satellite
    o Potential to work in partnership with the Province to develop affordable options – rebate programs – to ensure everyone has access to affordable connectivity
    o Geostationary and low-Earth orbit satellite
- Providing notification to property buyers of connectivity availability.

NEW BUSINESS

<u>Cell Tower Installation at Perow</u>

Director Newell requested an update regarding the status of the cell tower installation at Perow (near Houston). Staff will inquire.

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Director Newell
Seconded by Director Lambert

<u>BBC.2021-4-6</u>

"That the meeting be adjourned at 9:55 a.m."

(All/Directors/Majority)   <u>CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY</u>

_____   _____
Michael Riis-Christianson, Chair   Cheryl Anderson, Director of Corporate Services

Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako
Connectivity Committee Memorandum

To: Chair Riis-Christianson and Committee

From: Nellie Davis, Manager of Regional Economic Development

Date: February 10, 2022

Regarding: **Prioritization Criteria Metrics**

Recommendation:

Discussion.

Background:

As part of the RDBN Connectivity Strategy development, criteria and metrics for prioritizing projects must be established to facilitate a logical order for planning and establishing attainable goals. Staff are proposing metrics and asking for other metrics the Committee would like considered.

Considerations for prioritization will remain responsive to individual Director's unique considerations for their area in consultation with staff and Partners, though staff recommend that considerations for establishing priorities should always include:

1) Logical sequencing of construction (building off existing infrastructure).
   This will be a particularly important consideration for fibre to the home projects, as transport fibre cannot be constructed in isolated segments. It will also be a consideration for wireless projects, as towers require fibre to operate. For example, existing or planned fibre builds in member municipalities and First Nations communities may provide a core from which to partner and extend service with considerable cost savings.

2) Population density – lowest cost per home passed.
   Staff have developed and tested a costing formula to help rank projects in an area based on lowest cost per home passed. While the formula uses a cost factor, the formula is not intended to provide accurate project costing but allow projects in an area to be compared against each other.

3) Existing service levels – areas with some service may fall below areas with no service.
   While we understand that all residents have a degree of dissatisfaction with their current service levels and our goal is to ensure everyone has access to speed at or above the minimum standard, some areas stand out as having no service at all. Though they may not have a high population density, where possible,

projects may be developed to serve un-served areas before projects are developed to serve under-served areas.

4) Areas that are eligible for federal and provincial funding (area with less than 50/10 service).
Conversations around Innovation, Science and Economic Development (ISED) speed mapping and how connectivity speeds are reported for the purpose of grant eligibility is currently a topic of conversation at several levels of government. UBCM and the Ministry of Citizen Services commissioned an Internet Speed Study to review the mapping of internet speed data, the results of which are expected soon.

While the nature of connectivity planning requires the ability to shift quickly with new information, prioritization criteria will allow staff and Directors to work with partners on the implementation of short, immediate, and long-term goals through Strategic Implementation Phases.

The RDBN Connectivity Strategy will propose that the build-out of infrastructure for prioritized projects involve three phases:

Phase 1: Design
In this Phase, RDBN Staff and Directors will work with Partners to finalize project boundaries and best infrastructure for the service area. Partner staff will design the project, including all technical components, and provide a final cost estimate.

Phase 2: Funding
Once designed, the RDBN and Partner will indicate their own level of financial contribution to the capital project budget. For the RDBN this contribution can be made via available allocations of the Canada Community-Building Fund (Previously Federal Gas Tax – Community Works Fund).
In many cases, these combined contributions will not be the full amount required to fund a rural infrastructure build.

For the remainder of the project budget, we will first consider pursuing grant funding from senior levels of government via Provincial and Federal Connectivity Infrastructure Funding.   This funding is critical to the implementation of rural connectivity infrastructure, though it does present challenges due to high rates of over-subscription and long processing timelines.

It may be the case that not all projects will be eligible for grant funding or that, despite eligibility, project costs and cost per home passed are too high to have a good chance of success in a competitive grant program. In these cases, alternative budgeting considerations may be investigated, including:
- Partnerships with First Nations governments and member municipalities
- In-Kind Community Contributions

- Partnerships with Industry
- Reinvestment of RDBN revenue generated through P3 agreements

In some cases, where senior government grant funding is not an option, alternative funding mechanisms may need to be investigated. These mechanisms would take significant time and resources as they would require service establishment based on a specific project boundary through a referendum. These mechanisms will be considered on a specific project basis, and not for the Region as a whole and may include:

- Taxation for capital costs
- Borrowing from MFA for capital costs

Phase 3: Build
Once funding has been confirmed for the project, a build timeline will be provided by the Partner for the project area(s).

The three phases of each Priority Project will occur in a laddered approach to ensure that projects are moved along the process and RDBN projects will (wherever possible) be ready in advance of grant funding opportunity announcements. For example, once the immediate priority project reaches the 'Fund' phase, the next project in line will enter the 'Design' phase to facilitate a continuous progression. The length of time a project remains at each stage (particularly the 'Fund" stage) is subject to variables outside our control and will vary from project to project and EA to EA.