

Broadband Infrastructure Builds For The Future

SEQUIM GAZETTE

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If you're talking about a garage or storage space it seems like it is never big enough. In the design stage you try to imagine all of the uses you will have. You then build it a little bigger "just in case," After the garage is finished you still have one car parked outside. . . Just not big enough. The same is true for Broadband. How big is big enough, and have you anticipated all of the uses you might have now and in the future.



Guest Opinion

Fred Mitchell

Because utility infrastructure is expensive to build, your Clallam County Public Utility District builds for the future so additions and remodels are not required in the near term. The PUD believes broadband is big enough at 100MB or greater. Sure DSL and other technologies may be adequate now, but building new infrastructure now requires us to anticipate the needs and uses of the future.

Clallam PUD continues to roll out its broadband pilot program in the Sequim area. Through public meetings, letters and private conversations we are beginning to assess the value of broadband in business applications and consumer use. We are examining the benefits, our pricing structure, and the public's desire for this new utility. What we have found so far is very encouraging.

From a small office of a few attorneys, a software company with 14 employees, and a construction company - broadband is helping achieve operational efficiencies. The public support for broadband convinced us to expand the pilot area, which now covers 20 square blocks in downtown Sequim, as well as one mile of Carlsborg Road from Highway 101.

Primo Construction on Carlsborg Road was recently hooked up to broadband through the Clallam PUD network. Here is what Mary Matriotti, the Controller for Primo Construction, says:

"For the past few years, we have utilized the Internet for transactions such as direct payroll deposit, e-mail, banking transactions, tax reporting and 401K deferrals. Immediately we noticed a time savings of about 3 hours per week on these items alone.

"In addition, there were services which we were previously not able to utilize because of the slower connection. Now we can also transmit our Intent & Affidavits of Prevailing Wage, access the Labor & Industries claim reports and download plans and specifications. We no longer have to worry about the transfer "timing out" and having to start over. This fiber optic connection makes it possible to access this information quicker, saving 2 to 3 days, which gives us a head start on reporting and bidding."

Right away, the company is realizing time savings and efficiency benefits. There are also less quantifiable but very valuable benefits to broadband. The time we spend finding and exchanging information impacts us, and everybody else who needs that information. Observes Mary Matriotti:

"In the past, in order to do any research on the Internet, we had to spend several hours waiting...waiting...waiting... for downloads. Now, research is quick and easy, allowing us to do much more on line and much less on the telephone and via mail. Occasionally, our subcontractors will request us to access items on the Internet that would take them quite some time and which now takes us just a minute."

Sawtooth Software in Sequim needs fast, reliable Internet connection to transfer large files. They were one of the first businesses to connect through the PUD fiber optic line.

"With high-speed connection our productivity increases tremendously," said Sawtooth Software President Christopher King. "And, most important to us, we have an always-on, consistent, reliable connection. It reflects positively on us, especially in our business, to be able to communicate quickly and reliably with our clients."

Broadband allows Sequim to compete in larger markets, and to retain and attract talent. More and more jobs are possible through telecommuting. It is not necessary to go to urban areas to have access to world-class resources. Broadband is a tool that allows Clallam County businesses to operate globally.

We appreciate any comments you may have about your experiences with broadband, or questions about the service. You can contact me at fredm@clallampud.net. Keep in mind that Clallam PUD is only authorized to sell *wholesale* telecommunications services. For broadband pricing, availability and scheduling a hook-up in the pilot area, call one of the following Internet Service Providers: Townsend Communications, (360) 385-0464; Ten Forward Communications, (360) 457-9023; OrcaNet, (253) 627-8000; Computer Solutions; Olypen, (360) 683-1456 x6101

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