



**Inland Empire Regional Roundtable  
Summary from June 16, 2008 Discussion  
at the Riverside Public Utilities Commission**

*“[In Riverside] we started to work on the Digital Inclusion Program, which includes providing residents with computer-literacy training, a refurbished computer, and Internet at home. There is a need to gather and share best practices to develop Digital Inclusion programs that help reach scale statewide.”*

*--Steve Reneker, Chief Information Officer, City of Riverside*

*“We need to bring more stakeholders to the table and work in collaboration to ensure people adopt broadband and technology throughout the region. Technology represents a competitive advantage for the Inland Empire.”*

*-- Bill Carney, President & CEO, Inland Empire Economic Partnership*

*“ Broadband is the foundation for community economic development; it has a tremendous positive impact on business growth, transportation and logistics, advanced communication, environmental quality, telecommuting, telemedicine, education, and social networking.”*

*--Timothy Gerrity, Director, OTTC at CalState San Bernardino*

**Overview of the Inland Empire Region**

The Inland Empire Region consists of two counties (San Bernardino and Riverside) and fifteen cities covering 720,000 square miles with a total population of 4.03 million. Broadband is available to 96%<sup>1</sup> of the households in the region while only 35% - 45% of households subscribe for service.<sup>2</sup> The disparity between broadband availability and adoption framed the Regional Roundtable held on June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2008.

*“ The key question for policymakers: Is broadband a public utility or not? The FCC is asking this question as well. In California, we need to assert our leadership by being competitive and figuring out how to aggregate demand.”*

*--Matt Frymire,  
Chief Information Officer,  
County of Riverside*

The California Broadband Task Force (CBTF) recommends a range of strategies to encourage access, use, and learn broadband. CBTF recognizes the benefits to communities, businesses, healthcare institutions, and government that broadband deployment and adoption will produce. CBTF views broadband is a new type of infrastructure and it is critical that California build a next-generation network capable of delivering the applications that Californians needs both now and in the future. For additional information about the CBTF see [www.calink.ca.gov](http://www.calink.ca.gov).

<sup>1</sup> “State of Connectivity” from the Governor’s Task Force on Broadband. Research provided by Jed Kolko from the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC).

<sup>2</sup> Riverside Unified School District.

## Significant Initiatives in the Inland Empire Region

- City of Riverside, *Smart Riverside* Program focuses on increased use of broadband in downtown Riverside. Targeting 30,000 low-income households and providing a free PC, free training and free access to the internet. Nearly 1500 units have been delivered since 2005.
- The Green Valley Initiative moving towards a more sustainable region and improved quality of life. Includes bringing connectivity and economic development to rural areas.
- ESRI is a data company requiring higher bandwidth to push data of maps or “societal GIS” information. 311 Data Center can provide emergency service providers with real time maps to provide services more efficiently.
- OTTC at CSSB helps business start, grow and achieve sustainable success over time. The role of technology is critical to the OTTC approach.
- Riverside Unified School District has training centers in public school facilities (broadband connection) that are available to the general public for computer literacy training and accessing the internet.
- The City of Fontana has public library that is wired and includes state of the art computer terminals that are used by students every afternoon.
- Loma Linda has a terrestrial deployment plan that requires all building codes to include structured cable and fiber in all new development projects. Central connection points: medical center, convalescent centers and new residences. Pilot Hospital Care Program supported by real time video (patient monitoring). Other uses include: street light control; water production and pumping stations.
- San Bernardino County General Plan state: when changes are made to roads there must be improvements made to the cable system. In addition, San Bernardino WIB Social requires service centers, job centers, libraries, and affordable housing projects to have broadband access.

## Barriers to Accelerating Broadband Adoption

*“Low-income families and individuals have so many challenges to deal with...the Internet is the least of their problems. Telemental health has been a very powerful tool to assist caretakers and people with all kinds of mental issues.”*

*--Rod Jaffe,  
Riverside County DPSS*

- Computer usage in the home is limited to families with resources available to acquire hardware, software, training and continual upgrades. Low-income community members need to be educated and informed about the availability of computers and provided with the necessary training. The region needs economic development programs that decrease the number of families living below the Area Medium Income (AMI).
- There is no shortage of demand for refurbished computers, but coordinating contributions from the major employers who upgrade their systems on every three years could accelerate the effectiveness of donor-based programs.
- Rural portions of the region do not represent an attractive market for the telecommunications companies and as such they are not served by the major telecomm companies. Access to certain parts of the region is difficult due to mountainous terrain and long distances.
- Despite the need for e-health solutions, patient security is a major barrier. Regulatory and political issues limit the sharing of patient files. The technology is in place, but agreement over

how to share medical records will require amendments to privacy laws. One suggestion is to link medical databases in a way as to make them different from official documents.

### **Opportunities for Increasing Broadband Adoption**

- E-Government: Local government should allow citizens to interact with public agencies at their own convenience, rather than complying with traditional working hours and locations.
- Tele-health and Telemedicine: Saving lives and lowering health care costs by allowing healthcare professionals to view and send medical images and information to and from offices and hospitals quickly and securely. While remote operation is helpful in rural areas, it also proves invaluable as a time-saving measure in urban areas where busy physicians have access to a wireless network to transmit prescriptions, diagnosis and treatments remotely. Broadband allows for electronic monitoring of patients by doctors who are off-site, without the extra expense and inefficiency of having to rely on staff to be physically on-site to provide services and value. Telecommuting is key if we are to have a cleaner environment in the future.
- Access to computers for the developmentally disabled: A range of innovative applications greatly improves quality of life for persons with developmental disabilities while reducing the cost to the public of providing services and travel.
- Land Use and Infrastructure: Public safety, building inspection, public works and asset management are top applications governments can use over broadband networks. Eliminating paperwork processing and improving interdepartmental operations are two needs that cut across most departments.
- Employers: Industry is growing in locations that have high-speed lines and where employees have ready and affordable access to broadband in their homes.

*“Funding is always a challenge because broadband is not yet perceived as a utility. Applications will not be in our desktops anymore but will be on the Internet. In order to attract people to use the Internet, web-based content needs to be developed. We need visionaries in business or government to conduct a regional or national campaign for people to adopt technology. It is too expensive to do it by ourselves.”*

*--Greg Lee, City of Riverside*

### **Consensus on Priority Strategies and Next Steps**

- Regional coordinating among local government, business, social service providers, educators, health care professionals and others must rally to plan for increasing adoption rates in the Inland Empire.
- The key to accelerate broadband deployment is collaboration. We need visionaries in business and government to lead a campaign for people to adopt new technology. It is too expensive to do it by ourselves. Funding is always a challenge because broadband is not yet perceived as a utility. Applications will not be on your desktop but on the Internet. In order to attract people to adopt the Internet, compelling and up-to-date web-based content is essential.
- State Policy to provide incentives for including Digital Inclusion programming planning into General Plans would expedite broadband adoptions rates.

- Utilization of public facilities (schools, libraries, community colleges) will be a critical strategy for expanding computer usage and digital inclusion.

### **Participant List**

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