

Communication to City Council of Portland, Oregon in support of Municipal Broadband  
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May 30, 2018

My name is Russell Senior. I am the President of a volunteer-based non-profit called the Personal Telco Project<sup>1</sup>. We are known in Portland for building and managing free to the end-user public-access wifi networks. In addition to building networks, we advocate for an end to the monopoly power that incumbent telecommunications companies currently hold.

I am also active with Municipal Broadband PDX<sup>2</sup>. It has a Facebook group of about 3000 people, and has been reaching out to build political support for this long overdue idea. We have support from Multnomah County Democrats, some community and labor groups, and many in the small business community and the general public.

I am here on behalf of all Internet subscribers and would-be subscribers in the City, to ask for your help. Today, access to the Internet is no more a luxury than paved streets or clean tap water. Your constituents, businesses and residents alike, are in the clutches of Big Telco, empowered by a federal regulatory regime that cedes control to the owners of the last-mile infrastructure. Big Telco has absolute power to define service options you have on their network, set prices arbitrarily, sell your browsing histories, and employ whatever other business strategy wrings the maximum profit for their shareholders.

The only practical way to escape this intolerable situation is for the users and would-be users to become the owners of the infrastructure, so that it can be managed in their interests.

Municipal Broadband has been described here as “not possible”. I would direct your attention to page 51 of the 2007 feasibility study<sup>3</sup> which projected that at the end of 20 years, the network would be \$118 million in the black, even under their wildly pessimistic 6% bond interest rate.

Comcast alone takes in about \$200 million per year in revenue<sup>4</sup> from your constituents. Much of that revenue is pure profit made possible by their monopoly power. In the decade since the 2007 study, that accrued revenue could have built a public fiber network several times over.

It is time to seriously pursue an at-cost fiber optic network. There is a revenue model to support it. Hundreds of communities around the country<sup>5</sup> have done this. Here in Oregon, we have Sandy<sup>6</sup>, Monmouth-Independence<sup>7</sup>, and now Hillsboro<sup>8</sup>.

Last week, a budget amendment for \$150k was proposed by Multnomah County to help fund a new feasibility study, taking into consideration the changed cost and market realities since 2007, as well as the consequences of doing nothing. We are asking the City of Portland to match that amount, as a first step towards building a network that can serve the people of Portland instead of enslave them.

Thanks for your attention.

## References:

- 1 <https://personaltelco.net>
- 2 <https://municipalbroadbandpdx.org>
- 3 <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/revenue/article/396110>
- 4 Assumes Portland has 250,000 premises, and that Portland is completely average, data from:  
<https://www.sec.gov/Archives/edgar/data/902739/000116669118000004/cmcsa-12312017x10k.htm>
- 5 <https://muninetworks.org/communitymap>
- 6 <https://www.ci.sandy.or.us/sandynet/>
- 7 <https://www.minetfiber.com/>
- 8 <https://www.opb.org/radio/programs/thinkoutloud/segment/hillsboro-internet-thurston-shooting-anniversary-homeless-flimmakers/>