

# Telecommunications Policy Advisory Committee-TPAC

## STATE OF THE UNION

June 23, 2008

The City Council of Colorado Springs  
Post Office Box 1575  
Colorado Springs, CO 80901-1575

Dear Mayor Rivera and Members of the City Council:

Following is a semi-annual report to Council from the Telecommunications Policy Advisory Committee (TPAC), as required by Council resolution. This has been an interesting period for our committee and, as described below, the coming year promises a variety of important activities.

### **Membership**

We are pleased to report that after almost a year of committee members coming and going, the committee is at full strength (eight members and one alternate). All members have completed the compulsory city ethics training.

### **Accomplishments**

Over the past several years, the TPAC has focused on the following core areas:

- 1) Evaluating demand in the community for broadband services by conducting surveys, focus groups, and other such information gathering means.
- 2) Evaluating legal barriers to government involvement by reviewing pertinent federal, state, and local law and regulations.
- 3) Evaluating land development policies and other local ordinances to ascertain their relationship to broadband services and to identify opportunities to enable broadband services in the community by revisions to policies and ordinances.
- 4) Evaluating municipal opportunities for financially-sound market entry as an "enabler" or "wholesale" provider of broadband services (i.e. towers, buildings, infrastructure, conduit and dark fiber).

### **Green Paper**

The TPAC and team produced the "Green Paper." This paper addressed the above areas and produced a high-level road map of where the committee felt the City of Colorado Springs should direct its efforts in pursuing enterprise-wide broadband services.

### **Outlined the Flow of Service Requests to the City**

The TPAC and members of the City Information Technology Department and Colorado Springs Utilities produced a functional diagram that outlines the provisioning flow after a request for City services (i.e. wireless) was received.

### **New Competition for Video/Internet**

TPAC and members of the City worked to bring additional providers to Colorado Springs. New providers signal that Colorado Springs is a new and growing marketplace, and the citizens benefit with a larger choice of providers and services. Falcon Broadband and Porchlight are new companies in the video arena along with the established provider, Comcast.

**TPAC  
Members**

**Chairman  
Gerald Geyer, Jr.**

**Vice-Chair  
Michael Freeman**

**Secretary  
Marshall Tuttle**

**Michael W. Faber**

**Russ Fertitta**

**Richard Embury**

**Haze Hutmacher**

**Justin Burns**

**Kevin Borr  
(alternate)**

**Cable Television Service**

In its role as advisor to City government on telecommunications issues, the TPAC traditionally has played a role in ensuring that the City's cable television provider, Comcast, is meeting the customer service obligations contained in its franchise with the City. TPAC member Michael Faber has assisted City staff in its enforcement responsibilities. It should be noted that during the Comcast acquisition of Adelphia and the ramp up of a new call center on Centennial Boulevard, Comcast's customer service metrics were falling behind. However, I am pleased to announce that with extra focus from Comcast, those metrics have improved and are up to standards. Reporting statistics for Falcon Broadband and Porchlight are pending as those companies ramp up their service subscribers.

**New Technology - Wi-Fi Projects**

During the past year, the TPAC supported the exchange of lessons learned between the SkyTel pilot program, Colorado Springs Utilities and various Colorado Springs government offices. During the early part of the year, two prospective city-wide Wi-Fi providers made presentations at TPAC meetings and the possibility of a city-wide network looked promising. We researched and monitored the implementation of city-wide Wi-Fi networks in other cities. In the latter part of the year, our monitoring of Wi-Fi projects and providers' progress showed a demise of future city-wide network installations. It became evident that the current provider business models did not work and providers saw more problems, both technical and financial, and lost interest in city-wide network developments. The SkyTel pilot project was shut down and the City purchased the SkyTel assets for an internal test bed at a fire-sale price. It should be noted that other major cities (recently Philadelphia) are having the same Wi-Fi vendor abandonment situations, as those companies cannot provide the service that supports a profitable business model.

The TPAC is now researching and monitoring the Wi-Max technology as the most likely future city-wide radio based data network and consumer internet connection service.

**Future Projects**

The committee believes we need to broaden our scope to address not only new technology that is coming out (e.g. Wi-Fi vs. Wi-Max, etc.) but also look at how technology can:

- Improve the quality of life within Colorado Springs
- Improve the delivery of City services to citizens/customers
- Make Colorado Springs the city of choice for new industries
- Improve the ability for businesses to leverage enterprise City services to improve their sales

Therefore, the committee's focus over the coming year will be on:

Aligning efforts with the City's IT strategic plan. The committee has started this effort by mapping out those strategic points and turning them into tactical objectives. Those objectives will be reviewed by the larger group for priority and the ability of the TPAC to accomplish those objectives with the resources currently available.

One objective is to review the springsgov.com website against other websites of similar sized cities and recommend to the City what improvements can be made to make this website the premier site where citizens can visit and perform transactions (eGovernment) that save time and gasoline. Finally, the committee feels that eGovernment will improve staff efficiencies.

On behalf of the members of the TPAC, I would like to thank you for this opportunity to serve the citizens of Colorado Springs. It is our hope that we can make a contribution to our city's quality of life for current and future generations.

Respectfully submitted,

Gerald J. Geyer, Jr.  
Chairman, TPAC