

CRD CONNECTIVITY COMMITTEE

REPORT TO THE BOARD

October 3, 2022

BACKGROUND

The CRD Connectivity Committee is a Select Committee of the Board and members are appointed by the Board.

Chair:

Maureen LeBourdais, Director, Area F

Members:

Gerald Kirby Director Area J

Margo Wagner Director Area H and CRD Chair

Barb Bachmeier, Director Area B

Rehan Siddiqui Targeted Regional Tourism Development Project Manager CCCTA

Nirach Suapa Learning Commons and Students Support Coordinator, TRU

Robin Hunt, Current Secretary, South Cariboo Farmers Market; Young Agrarians Regional Coordinator, Central BC

Jon Code, Staff, CRD IT Manager

PURPOSE

The Committee is responsible to prepare and present a report identifying options and recommendations as to how the Cariboo Regional District can facilitate development/expansion of connectivity (cellular and broadband) in the Cariboo Regional District, as well as priorities for such actions.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Attached Appendix I

ACTIVITIES TO DATE

1. March 10, 2022

- Committee introductions
- Selection of Chair
- Mike Thomas of Tanex Engineering was in attendance to provide an overview of the Cariboo Regional District's Broadband Strategy and its recommendations.

2. April 22, 2022

- Discussion on Universal Broadband funding process and the role of local governments in approving funding applications.
- Joel McKay, Chief Executive Officer of the Northern Development Initiative Trust, was in attendance to discuss how Local Governments are engaging in connectivity strategies.

3. May 25, 2022

- The committee reviewed governance options from the CRD Connectivity Strategy (attached Appendix II). Guests included:
- Nellie Davis, Manager of Regional Economic Development, for the Regional District of Bulkley Nechako (RDBN), was in attendance to discuss the RDBN's Connectivity service

- Trevor Ouellette, Information Technology Manager and Crystal Brown Electoral Area Manager, from the Peace River Regional District (PRRD), was in attendance to discuss Connectivity initiatives in the PRRD.

4. **October 3, 2022**

- Committee reviewed this draft report for presentation to the Board.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **That the CRD Board, through the Connectivity Committee, establish criteria for approving Letters of Support for ISPs funding applications.**

Rationale: The Province recently announced the funding application process to access combined federal and provincial funds totally \$830 mil. [Connecting Communities BC - Province of British Columbia \(gov.bc.ca\)](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/comm/funding/communities/communities-bc-province-of-british-columbia). Applicants will continue to need LOS from the relevant local government. To date, the CRD Board has written LOS for all requests, and expedited the process by not requiring Board discussion and approval, allowing the Chair to make the determination. Requests that came to us usually indicated time sensitivity. However, the time may have come for the CRD to reasonably require more information from telecoms and ISPs on what their plans are for our area, and how their proposed projects help the CRD meet the objective of our Connectivity Strategy.

2. **That the CRD Board send requests for Connectivity funding LOS to the Connectivity Committee for review and comment, so that this committee can ensure requests align with CRD Connectivity Strategy goals, and
...that the Connectivity Committee invite telecoms and ISP to periodically present to the Committee on their long-term plans for the region. Acknowledging that, due to the competitive nature of the sector, presentations could be done in-camera, and
...that the Board delegate authority to provide letters of support, to the Connectivity Committee.**

Rationale:

View letters of support as the conclusion to a conversation, not the beginning of one. By viewing letters of support, not as a hard negotiation, but as an opportunity to compare their priorities against our regional gaps analysis to understand what is likely to get served, and what remains. This process could also help ISPs strengthen their submissions and pave the way should applications be successful.

Criteria could include:

- ✓ *What are your investment plans for our region?*
- ✓ *How does this project fit in?*
- ✓ *How many underserved households, or what geographic area, does your application encompass?*
- ✓ *Will your application leave unserved or underserved households within the geographic area?*
- ✓ *Is there any flexibility in the project to adjust for our priorities? (i.e., improved service to a firehall, digital monitoring of slopes or water systems, etc.)*
- ✓ *What technology do your plan on utilizing? (i.e., FTTH, HFC, Fixed Wireless – LTE)*
- ✓ *What existing infrastructure do you own in our area that you are planning to leverage?*
- ✓ *Will the backbone and last mile technology enable 50/10Mbps ubiquitously within the geographical area?*
- ✓ *How can we help you understand our region's economic and development priorities. so, you can better fill out the attachment (Template 6) on community rural and development benefits?*

3. That additional CRD staff be authorized to participate in Connectivity Committee meetings, as occasion arises .e.g. Emergency Services and Community Services Managers

Rationale: Ensure the connectivity lead, the regional IT lead and key staff leads are engaged in, and can then support committee-level conversations, leverage existing capacity, build staff capacity and ISP relationships.


4. That the CRD Board invite a representative from Connected Communities BC to participate ex-officio on the Connectivity Committee

Rationale: CCBC staff have offered to participate in this role and does so at several other RD Committees around the province: advising and providing details of the program as it rolls out; sharing experiences from other RD tables; giving us opportunities to reciprocate back to the province.

OTHER CONSIDERATION

That the CRD Board explore establishing a connectivity service, in order to apply for funding and partner directly with service providers.

APPENDIX I

 <h2 style="text-align: center;">Committee Terms of Reference</h2>	
<h3>Connectivity Committee</h3>	
Effective Date:	
Review:	Annually
Revised:	
<p>The Connectivity Committee's purpose is to provide a report, including options and recommendations, to the Cariboo Regional District Board of Directors to facilitate/develop broadband and cellular services throughout the Cariboo Chilcotin. The Connectivity Committee is a Select Committee of the Board of Directors.</p>	
Members:	<p>The Connectivity Committee is made up of the following members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four Electoral Area Directors, one of each representing the South, Central, North and Chilcotin. • A member at large from the Tourism Sector in the Cariboo-Chilcotin. • A member at large from the Agriculture Sector in the Cariboo-Chilcotin. • A member at large from the Education or Health Sector (or a sector to be determined by the Board).

	All members shall be appointed by the Board of Directors. The Chair of the Committee shall be chosen from the membership, by the membership.
Staff:	The Chief Administrative Officer and/or the Manager of Information Technology shall participate in the meetings and provide support and guidance. The Deputy Corporate Officer shall be responsible for agendas and minutes.
Duties:	<p>The Committee is responsible to prepare and present a report identifying options and recommendations as to how the Cariboo Regional District can facilitate development/expansion of connectivity (cellular and broadband) in the Cariboo Regional District, as well as priorities for such actions. The report shall be based on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A review of the Cariboo Regional District Regional Broadband Strategy prepared by TANEx Engineering and presented to the Board in May 2021, and the identification of recommendations and options to be considered. • The identification and examination of options chosen by other Regional Districts in facilitating the development of connectivity (cellular and broadband) within their communities. • The identification of the various funding/facilitation opportunities available to the public and private sector in British Columbia to facilitate connectivity development. • The development of a process to examine connectivity needs and to establish priorities for action and support. • The identification of governance options that are consistent with current legislation, regulation and Regional District best practices. <p>The Final Report and Presentation shall be completed no later than the end of September 2022.</p> <p>Minutes of meetings will be recorded and kept by CRD staff and approved by the Committee.</p>
Duties of the Chair:	Duties of the Chair include liaising with staff, agenda development, and facilitation of meetings.

APPENDIX II

6.3.1 Summary of Residential Survey Results (from CRD Connectivity Strategy)

Survey question: I support CRD pursuing improved internet service through: (check all that apply):

1. " Internet service provider (like Telus) builds the infrastructure to provide service and owns it. All control and future responsibilities are the responsibility of the provider.

2. " CRD subsidizes the cost (through federal grants, i.e., gas tax or other) and the service provider still owns the infrastructure. All control and future responsibilities are the responsibility of the provider.
3. " CRD builds, owns, and maintains an internet utility (through federal grants, i.e., gas tax or other). A new ongoing taxpayer funded CRD service would be established, and control and future responsibilities are the responsibility of CRD.
4. " CRD partners with private industry partners and shares costs, control, and responsibility.

Among respondents there was clear agreement with the notion that improved internet is needed in the CRD and that such improvements would have positive effects for the region such as attracting potential residents and businesses, improving economic activity, and other such benefits. Most respondents stated they would support the CRD providing support to service providers and subsidizing the cost.

- Most respondents – 60% – do not think the CRD should fully build, own, and operate an internet utility themselves.
- Other options included: Internet Service Provider builds and operates the infrastructure without financial assistance from the CRD – 41% support this option even though it may mean no improvement in service.
- While 60% support the idea of the CRD providing assistance to the service provider which might include financial support. ▪
- The CRD wholly owns, funds, and operates the infrastructure itself – 40% support this option. ▪
- The CRD partners with private industry partners to share costs, control, and responsibility of the infrastructure – 56% support this option