



Austin's 1995 RFSP for a City-Wide Broadband Network

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Telecommunications Commission
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Office of Telecommunications & Regulatory
Affairs

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Municipal Network Infrastructure

- 1995 RFSP: city-wide broadband network
- Renewed interest:
 - Wireless network technology
 - Broadband stimulus
- Public infrastructure
 - Electricity, Water, Streets, etc.
 - Why not telecom networks, as well?
- “Natural monopoly” – public control by franchise
- Alternative: direct provision by city



Building the “Information Superhighway”

- Clinton/Gore administration proposals
- Internet recently opened to private use
- 1996 cable franchise renewal imminent
- Digital & cable technologies converging
- “Open platform” idea gaining attention
- Information Technology Policy Board sets up committee to study Advanced Telecommunications Infrastructure



Policy for Advanced Network

- Universal availability:
 - Connections available throughout the city
 - Multiple providers share single facility
- Open platform:
 - Easy access for all service providers
 - Two-way digital technology
- Abundant bandwidth:
 - Guaranteed capacity
 - Helps guarantee access



Request for Information (RFI)

- RFI issued June 1994. 34 responses
- How to implement an open platform
- Function:
 - Two-way digital broadband connecting every home and business
 - Multiple providers share single facility
 - Abundant bandwidth = rich competition
- Organization:
 - Private, public or hybrid scenarios
 - Revenue model for City



Request for Proposals (RFP)

- RFI Committee report recommends RFP
- Request for Strategic Partners for Telecommunications Infrastructure (RFSP)
- Issued March 1995. 12 responses.
- Various technologies
 - Hybrid fiber-coax (HFC); SONET fiber
 - All fiber (fiber to the home); SONET/ATM
- Different models for City participation
- PURA 1995 (HB 2128) blocks municipal telecom



RFSP Review & Recommendations

- Panel evaluates responses, 6 in depth
- Recommends Central & Southwest Communications (Elec. Co. subsidiary)
 - Close to City's vision
 - Company to fund entire buildout
- City has no role in operation (per PURA 95)
- City issues franchise to CSWC, August 1996



Epilogue

- CSWC doesn't build the network
 - Franchise transfers to Choicecom
 - CAP/ "carrier's carrier"
- CSWC principals found Grande Comm.
- Challenges to PURA 95 & similar laws
 - US Telecom Act of 1996 allows municipal telecom; conflict unresolved
 - Actions in other states
- Wireless network technology sidesteps "no city" provision of PURA 95