

Corridor Wireless

Corridor Wireless Plan

By Chris Flynn

Overview of Proposal – System Analysis & Projections

I would like to propose an option for affordable internet access in the Cedar Rapids –Iowa City corridor area. This would include Marion, Hiawatha, and many of the small towns in the corridor. Currently, the options for getting affordable high speed internet access are limited to two choices - through a local cable company like Mediacom or Imon, or through a telephone company, such as Quest. There are also some not-for-profit communications cooperatives like South Slope that exist in parts of the corridor. Since there aren't many alternatives available, I would like to see free and fast internet access for public areas and affordable access for residents and area businesses. If this situation does not change in the future, the mega-corporations could disobey net neutrality and have the power to block almost any of the websites they want, and continue to charge outrageous fees to customers.

Current Situation – Obstruction Analysis

In the current market, our choices to obtain internet access results in Quest or Mediacom, with Imon steadily growing in the area. Some rural areas, like Fairfax, have the additional option of South Slope. Mediacom basically has a monopoly on internet access here, which lets them raise their fees and charge more for their services whenever they want to.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 was supposed to provide more competition for phone/cable services, but most of the interested companies went broke and quit the business, which left Mediacom to take control of the market. This kind of power is dangerous for the general public, because they have no voice in what happens. We have seen cable bills rise to ridiculous prices and have limited means of recourse. There needs to be a check-and-balance system here.

Some telecommunications companies have blocked websites and do not practice net neutrality. Unless we have more options for internet access, these companies could block websites that they don't want consumers to see. They can disrupt the amount of bandwidth the consumer receives in an effort to keep the consumer from viewing a particular website. Such telecommunications corporations would be the most resistant to any change,

since they have the power to control the market and want to keep it that way. Their slogan of “Delivering on the promise” means increasing their bottom line – profit.

Explaining proposal – Ends Planning

Cedar Rapids needs free and fast internet access for public places and affordable access for its residents and businesses because they do not have any feasible alternatives that are fair at this time. Mediacom is currently holding internet users hostage by charging too much for their services just so their profits soar. I would like to solve this problem by creating an independent non-profit network for wireless communications. Seattle, Washington, has already done this by starting Seattle Wireless, a non-profit, independent company with their own network.

Our area between Cedar Rapids and Iowa City is called the “technology corridor”. What better place is there to start Corridor Wireless than here? This service would be an excellent way to show the people of our corridor community that we want them to have equal access to the internet. Residents would benefit from having a “third pipe,” in other words, a new alternative for internet access that would be fair and give them an alternative to the prices charged by the current telecommunications companies. The main goal of Corridor Wireless would be to create really fast, reliable, and affordable WI-FI internet.

How could this work? Corridor Wireless would partner with the Cedar Valley Amateur Radio Club, a group who uses the same unlicensed radio frequencies that are shared with ISM (Industrial, Scientific & Medical) applications. These frequencies are used by medical MRI machines, microwaves, ultrasonic humidifiers, industrial paint dryers, and others.

Resources – Resource Planning

Corridor Wireless will start small and grow larger as residents and businesses become aware of the organization and enlightened about the opportunities it presents. To start out, I would begin with a small group of interested technology-minded volunteers who are creative and passionate about universal internet access. We would form as a loose-knit, non-profit association. We will meet in my basement, which will be filled with donated computer equipment and a small library of technological books and manuals. We will rely on donations to cover the startup costs of the

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organization. We will also have a post office box (\$60 annually), and our own website (\$10 annually). We will work together with community groups, area businesses, neighborhood associations, and eventually, large corporations. Word-of-mouth will be our marketing strategy at first, as well as internet resources like our website, Facebook, You Tube, etc. We will restructure the organization as a non-profit corporation under 501(c)(3) status under tax codes, which will allow us to receive favorable tax status for contributions. This status will let contributors deduct their donations to us. As public interest increases, our association will grow.

After we get our organization going, we hope to generate revenue from setting up wireless internet and maintaining services for our customers. I think we will need to have community support as well as corporate sponsors in order to have a viable, sustainable future. There are two ways our expansion could go – the non-profit corporation or the non-profit association. With the non-profit corporation, we would be “professional” and fund a building project and hire full-time employees. With the non-profit association, volunteers would continue to use the resources in their homes to broadcast the wireless signals for the internet. My current preference is to remain an association, so that we continue to serve the people and really “deliver the promise,” without getting caught up in the corporate image contest that most of the telecommunications companies do now.

Schedule – Design Implementation

January 2010

Website launched (CorridorWireless.net)
Find other interested individuals or groups
Measure feedback from website

Spring/Summer 2010

Contact Cedar Valley Amateur Radio Club
Attend classes on setting up a non-profit association
Take classes on computers & other related topics
Do a feasibility study

Future 2011- ?

Sink or swim