

The Fiber Project

I have been working on getting better Internet service for Maupin for the last 20 years. In the past year, I have been working and attending meetings and pushing for answers to get this fiber project completed. There have been several bumps, but I believe it will still be completed. The principle participants met with me here in Maupin yesterday. Here is a little history and information.

- This project began with a state grant and some other small grants to bring fiber down Bakeoven and loop around the business district.
- The City of Maupin partnered with Q-Life, managed by our county government, to plan and maintain the network. This would be a publicly owned system inside Maupin.
- LS Networks offered to build the backbone portion at no cost to the city as they were building to the cell towers. They also offered to install a POP building to distribute the connections.
- The state agreed that we could spend the grant money to build the system out to customers rather than for the backbone.
- Engineering plans and estimates showed it could be done with the funds available, so we let the community know what was being planned.
- Weather this winter slowed the project and much work was done to bid the in-town portions, obtain easements, etc..
- Bids for the in-town portion, with 3 bidders, came in way too high for the budget, so plans were modified and it was sent out for re-bid.
- LS Networks completed their portion and added some in-town lines to connect the school in June.
- The new bids came in to Q-Life even higher and there was only one bidder. Salary requirements of the grants, underground work in our rocky soil, and a busy season for contractors all contributed to this high cost.
- LSN connected some businesses to the fiber that they had built, not the publicly owned portion, most of which has not been built. Only those within reach of LSN's lines could be connected.
- **THIS BRINGS US TO THE PRESENT SITUATION**
- We are working with MCEDD to apply for a Federal grant to cover the \$350-400,000 needed to complete the project.
- Given the increased costs, the previous grants would only be enough to complete a portion of the desired network. This would likely mean connecting businesses directly to fiber, but few homes.
- We are continuing to get the best possible connections for all of our residents.
- Without a direct fiber connection, homes could still choose between CenturyLink's improved DSL service (available now) or a higher speed wireless operation (possible because of the fiber), most likely to be offered by GorgeNet.
- With all this, a completion and connecting date will probably be pushed to December under the most optimistic estimate, but could be as far out as next Spring.
- There is an "Option C" in all of this. Yesterday morning I was presented with a different solution that has the possibility of getting the entire project completed in the next few months with connections coming much sooner. I am working with the involved entities to evaluate this solution to make sure it will deliver what we have been waiting for.

If you have additional questions, please email me at maupinmayor@gmail.com