

## Photos



John Reynolds of Stratum Broadband provides details of a report that outlines the need for the CBN Connect broadband network and a conceptual design of the network. The project is being coordinated by the Technical Assistance Center at Plattsburgh State. Staff Photo/Rob Fountain /

Published October 11, 2007 10:30 pm - CBN Connect, a plan to expand broadband service in the tri-county area, would provide wholesale access to a broadband network that service providers could use to provide service to more parts of the region.

## Report cites importance of broadband network

Region badly needs broadband to compete, expert says

By **DAN HEATH**  
Staff Writer

PLATTSBURGH -- A report released Thursday shows a great need for the broadband network proposed for Clinton, Essex and Franklin counties.

"The region's remoteness and lack of broadband connectivity appears to have hindered market understanding and application of today's broadband services and their benefits," John Reynolds of Medford, Mass.-based Stratum Broadband, which helped create the report.

The report says more than 400 communities across the nation are pursuing similar projects as they realize how important they can be for community development.

### CONNECTIONS

The conceptual design of the CBN Connect broadband project, being coordinated by the Technical Assistance Center at Plattsburgh State, includes two main hubs: Plattsburgh and Saranac Lake. Those locations would allow connection to systems already in place in Lawrence County, Quebec, Burlington and New York City.

Each would be capable of running the network if the other were disabled.

A fiber-optic core loop would then be run to more than 20 key towns and villages in the area. That would be coupled with a wireless network to reach more remote sites.

CBN Connect would serve as a wholesaler, offering network access to the service providers such as telephone and cable companies. Those companies would then sell service to their customers.

### THE COST

The network could cost anywhere from \$14.9 million (bare bones) to \$53.4 million (fully loaded). Reynolds said 70 percent of the cost is in construction of the infrastructure to support and deliver signals through the fiber-optic cable.

He said the goal is to utilize assets that are already in place, to reduce the cost of the project. That would also make the service providers with those assets more likely to take on the project, he said.

"There are a number of existing towers and church steeples where we can put the system," Reynolds said.

He said 10 or so possible sources of federal funding exist for the project.

#### CELL-PHONE SERVICE

The network would also help extend cell-phone service throughout the tri-county area. Equipment installed at the key towns and villages, cell-phone service providers and a system of "repeaters" every mile or so to reach customers in outlying areas.

The report was commissioned by the Research Foundation of SUNY for the CBN Connect Advisory Board. Trois-Rivieres, Quebec-based Xit Telecom collaborated on the report.

Reynolds said he and a colleague interviewed more than 50 businesses, hospitals, colleges, telecommunication providers and municipalities for the study.

He said the towns of Ellenburg and Saranac have expressed interest in serving as the site of a pilot program. That would not be to prove the technology works, but to iron out procedural issues, such as how access will be provided or who will fix problems.

#### REVENUES PROJECTED

If the project was built using a \$35 million capital investment, CBN Connect projects revenues of nearly \$3 million the first year and \$8.2 million in the fourth year. Those revenues are what would allow CBN Connect to pay off the debt incurred in network creation. Reynolds had other figures that show that if service providers connect 80 percent of households by the fourth year, their revenues would be about \$25 million.

The next step is to create a business plan, which is needed to seek funding and assist in the design of the network.

dheath@pressrepublican.com