

Report ITR-PCD-02-16

To: Chair and Members of Planning and Community Development
Committee

From: Geoff Hogan, Information Technology (IT) Director

Meeting Date: December 10, 2015

Subject: **GREAT Network Plan**

Status: Recommendation 2 adopted by Committee per Resolution PCD10-16;
Endorsed by County Council January 5, 2016 per Resolution CC12-16;

Recommendation(s)

WHEREAS Grey County requested the location of fibre infrastructure from providers through a Request for pre-qualification (RFPQ) process;

AND WHEREAS only a few providers participated and fibre optic infrastructure data was only collected for part of the County;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT report ITR-PCD-02-16 be received;

AND THAT County staff and consultants be directed to create a green field network design for the entire geographic region of the County;

AND FURTHER THAT the providers that met the requirements of the RFPQ process be invited to bid on the RFP when provincial and federal funding is secured.

OR

WHEREAS Grey County requested the location of fibre infrastructure from providers through a Request for pre-qualification (RFPQ) process;

AND WHEREAS only a few providers participated and fibre optic infrastructure data was only collected for part of the county;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT report ITR-PCD-02-16 be received;

AND THAT County staff and consultants be directed to create a specific network design for certain portions of the County;

AND FURTHER THAT the providers that met the requirements of the RFPQ process be invited to bid on the RFP when provincial and federal funding is secured.

Background

The Western Ontario Warden’s Caucus (WOWC) SWIFT project has been collecting data, engaging stakeholders and providers and working towards regional funding for additional broadband infrastructure for the past three years. The approach to improving broadband in the WOWC region has been carefully considered and included significant consultation with providers and stakeholders.

In 2015, recognizing both the urgency of addressing the broadband access issue and a funding opportunity, County Council allocated \$1,000,000 (in addition to the commitment to the SWIFT project) to a reserve specifically for local broadband and instructed staff to apply to the Small Communities Fund (SCF) for further funding. An Expression of Interest (EOI) was submitted to the SCF program in October 2015, however an answer has not yet been received from the province. If the SCF application is successful, the \$1,000,000 allocated from reserve can be leveraged to build \$10,500,000 in broadband infrastructure as illustrated in the table below:

Funder	Amount
Federal portion of SCF	\$3,500,000
Provincial portion of SCF	\$3,500,000
Grey portion	\$1,000,000
Providers contribution	\$2,500,000
Total Project	\$10,500,000

In September, the County purchasing department released a request for pre-qualification (RFPQ) seeking information about existing infrastructure from telecom providers. This was done so County staff and consultants could create a plan to maximize the impact of the potential grant funds, best leverage existing fibre and avoid duplication or overbuilding existing infrastructure. The RFPQ was open for 2 months and closed October 30th. Only one provider with local fibre-optic infrastructure, provided data and 5 other companies (that provide primarily wireless services) submitted all the information requested. One provider submitted a response but did not provide the location of fibre information requested and the other companies operating in the region including: Eastlink, Rogers, Wightman, Bruce Telecom and Hurontel did not submit a response at all. The RFPQ was clear that if a complete response was not provided to the RFPQ, then companies would not be able to bid on the subsequent RFP.

Analysis

It is very unfortunate that the local providers did not provide the data requested after being given 60 days to do so. If all the providers had participated, a very clear plan could be put together to improve broadband in Grey County. Further attempts will be made with the providers to obtain the data. Staff and consultants feel there are two courses of action that can be taken with the lack of data collected during the RFPQ.

1. The consultants can create a green field¹ network design that aligns with the SWIFT project for all areas of the County. The design would take into account future potential SWIFT infrastructure and the needs of the community. Because fibre locations are not known assumptions will be made in the design and costs will be a green field estimate.
2. The consultants can create a design that builds on the data collected from the RFPQ that will provide more specific broadband improvements in a smaller geographic area near the participating provider's infrastructure. This design would also take into account future potential SWIFT infrastructure and the needs of the community. This option will have a more accurate cost.

A design needs to be completed so a cost estimate can be created. It is very likely the project will pass the EOI stage of the SCF competition. The design and cost is a key component of the next stage of the SCF application. In both cases it is staffs recommendation that only the providers that complied with the RFPQ be allowed to bid directly on the RFP. The providers that did not participate in the RFPQ could be used as subcontractors by the compliant bidders.

Financial / Staffing / Legal / Information Technology (IT)

Considerations

At this point only a design will be completed. An RFP will not be released until the County is successful in getting SCF funding for the project.

Link to Strategic Goals / Priorities

Goal Number One of the Corporate Strategic Plan is to expand the prosperity base of the County. This means enhancing and diversifying economic opportunities within the County, becoming "investment- ready" and ensuring the foundation is in place for

¹ A green field design refers to a design that does not include existing infrastructure and is costed with some conservative assumptions about how much existing infrastructure can be leveraged.

sustained success. Our shared vision of sustained community and regional prosperity encompasses

Respectfully submitted by,

Geoff Hogan
Director of Information Technology