



Montana's Rural Telecom Providers Investing in Montana's Future *Selected Highlights*

In General

- 16 Independent (i.e., non-Bell) telecom providers:
 - Provide traditional wireline telephony (local and long distance), wireless, Internet (broadband) access, competitive local exchange, satellite/DBS, etc.
 - Serve >30% of Montana's telecom consumers; >80% of Montana's landmass
 - Range in size from <1,000 customers to >60,000
 - Include commercial (shareholder-owned) and cooperative (member-owned/non-profit) companies
 - Customer density <3 access lines per mile
- Investment
 - \$80M+ annual expenditures in Montana
 - >\$775M total infrastructure investment
 - Approx. 1,000 Montana employees, with premium salaries and benefits
 - \$50 million annual payroll
 - \$23 million in benefits
 - \$16M+ annual federal, state, local taxes ('03)
 - 5,000+ miles of fiber
 - Broadband service is accessible to 80%+ of all customers in their service areas (better than S. Korea, the "most wired" nation in the world)
 - nearly 250 communities have access to broadband (DSL)—not including access to satellite (WildBlue) broadband service

Selected Examples of Broadband Products/Services/Investment by Montana's Rural Telcos

3 Rivers Telephone Cooperative (3R). Fairfield.

- 3R is partnering with a developer in Helena to build a fiber-to-the-premise (FTTP) housing and office development in Helena. Businesses and residents in this development will have direct access to the Web at megabit speeds.
- The company is deploying FTTP in all new builds, and has begun a network-wide retrofit of its copper plant with fiber.

Blackfoot Telephone Cooperative (BTC). Missoula.

- BTC is building an ultra-high-capacity Ethernet (100% Internet Protocol) backbone that provides bandwidth measured in gigabits per second. It will link households and communities into this "Gig-E" network, vastly expanding the bandwidth available to businesses and residents throughout its service area while simultaneously creating a more efficient and more robust network.
- BTC's technology lab, BATEL, is a nationally-acclaimed telecom technology and service testing and development facility.
- At the remote Great Divide Ranch near Philipsburg, MT, the non-profit Project Vote Smart provides online access to factual and unbiased information about

40,000 political candidates in every state. BTC's broadband telecommunications services make Project Vote Smart's databases available to its 45,000 members and voters nationwide.

CenturyTel (CTL). Kalispell.

- Pixar Entertainment, the animated movie company which has produced *Toy Story* among other films, is building a studio in Kalispell using CenturyTel's Gig-E network to link to its California headquarters.
- CTL is the lead partner with Montana's independent telecom providers on the statewide E-911 contract, providing one of the most advanced, robust, reliable, scalable, redundant E-911 networks in the nation.

Hot Springs Telephone Company (HSTC). Hot Springs.

- HSTC is plowing fiber to Perma, a town so small it has no post office. During wildfire season, Perma's population swells to over 400 as the town becomes a base camp for fire crews who have asked for—and will receive—broadband service at the base camp.

Vision Net-MAIN, Inc. Great Falls.

- Owned by a consortium of Montana's rural telcos
 - 70 employees
 - \$1.7 million payroll
 - OC3 – OC192 fiber backbone, 3-ring architecture for superior quality, redundancy
 - 24x7x365 network ops and technical assistance center with customers across the nation
 - 130 videoconference sites, including sites on all Tribal Reservations
 - On an average school day, 60 – 80 hrs. of K-12 classes across MT are taught using Vision Net's video conferencing network
 - Supports 57K customers; 35K Internet end-users, including State of Montana

iConnect Montana. Helena.

- *iConnect* provides neutral collocation in a secure, robust central office environment with access to multiple backbone networks, enabling small and large Internet-based companies to take advantage of economies of scale and scope.
- **Hotwire.com** has chosen to locate its servers at *iConnect's* Billings facility—demonstrating the world-class quality, security, redundancy and value of Montana's broadband capabilities.

(This is only a small sampling of the kinds of services, technologies and applications being deployed by Montana's independent rural telecom providers. Each one of these companies can list numerous examples of the economic benefits of their continued investment in Montana's telecom infrastructure. Moreover, these companies contribute tens of thousands of dollars annually in scholarships and donations community civic organizations and their employees contribute significantly to economic development and community activities.)

