

Completing survey will offer choices

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
Thursday, 10 April 2014 16:59 -



Fiber optic infrastructure in city has glass ceiling

Gothenburg Public School high schoolers are likely to have district-issued laptop computers next year.

In addition, local Internet users are under a glass ceiling when it comes to speed of service and new types of service for television and telephones.

And that makes recruitment of new business and industry and young people to town more difficult.

All of these reasons are behind the Gothenburg Improvement Company's drive to get the community to complete a technology assessment survey about phone, Internet and television usage and the current provider of those services.

As of Monday, 490 surveys have been returned with 1,200 still needed by Tuesday.

Angie Richeson, an integrated technology integration specialist and Dudley Elementary librarian, said current telecommunications infrastructure has a glass ceiling.

"We can't get bigger or faster without changing the infrastructure," she said. "And speed is an issue in our community."

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If the community wants their youth to return home, the GIC member said Gothenburg needs to be ready with fiber optic infrastructure.

Nate Wyatt, chair of the fiber infrastructure committee, compared the speed problem to people and doorways.

“We can only squeeze so many people through current doorways at once because we all share existing doorways,” Wyatt explained. “If we add more users as a result of the one-to-one laptop initiative, without putting in more doorways, we are all going to have to stand in line longer to get through the doorways.”

Although a handful of businesses have and pay for fiber optic lines and service, he said additional infrastructure would mean people won’t have to share lines.

Those who like their telecommunication service now can continue with their providers, he said, noting that more competition will bring out more competitive prices.

The bottom line, Wyatt said, is that lack of infrastructure keeps companies from locating or expanding to Gothenburg.

“There is then less opportunity for kids to return home,” said. “People expect this type of service when they relocate to an area.”

District 20 superintendent and GIC member Dr. Mike Teahon is also urging residents and business owners to complete and return the survey.

With the one-to-one Chromebooks initiative the district board is considering, Teahon said survey results would be helpful in developing a strategy for use of the laptop computers.

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“While you may, or may not, feel your Internet access is adequate at this time, bandwidth and the need for high-speed internet connectivity will only increase as we utilize on-line textbooks, stream educational videos, collaborate on class projects and create flipped classrooms,” he said.

Flipped classrooms, Teahon explained, are when teachers record lessons and post them on websites.

“Students watch the videos at home to learn the skills and complete independent practice or homework in the classroom the following day with the teacher available to help,” Teahon said.

Once fiber lines are installed, Richeson said they last forever.

The survey is necessary, she said, so someone interested in providing fiber optic service locally knows there’s a need for it.

A 60% response rate is needed.

“Gothenburg needs this to happen,” Richeson added.

Wyatt said the GIC committee has been working on getting fiber optic infrastructure for the past five years.

“If we don’t land this now, there’s no contingency plan,” he said. “This is a grassroots effort so that people have a choice.

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