



# REPORT

To: Broadband Internet and Mobility Committee

Report Number: ADM-BIMC-002

From: Crystal Brown, Electoral Area Manager

Date: October 20, 2021

**Subject: PRRD Connectivity Strategy Adoption and Workplan**

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## **RECOMMENDATION #1:**

That the Broadband Internet and Mobility Committee recommend that the Regional Board adopt the PRRD Connectivity Strategy.

## **RECOMMENDATION #2:**

That the Broadband Internet and Mobility Committee identify recommendations from the PRRD Connectivity Strategy for the Board's consideration to be implemented in 2022.

## **BACKGROUND/RATIONALE:**

The purpose of the Connectivity Strategy is to identify options for the PRRD to pursue to ensure that critical high-speed Broadband Internet services are accessible throughout the entire district, and to outline how the PRRD can facilitate and build Broadband infrastructure that is required to deliver Broadband Internet, and support competition.

The Connectivity Strategy is to be used as a framework to outline mid-to-long term goals for Broadband Internet connectivity throughout the region. It is intended to be forward looking and provide a benchmark to weigh future projects and opportunities against.

The role of the Standing Committee is to engage with service providers and stakeholders, research and review current technologies and market trends, share information, examine funding opportunities, develop a connectivity work plan, and make recommendations to the PRRD Board regarding Broadband Internet and mobility policy to fulfill the PRRD's connectivity vision. By identifying recommendations from the draft PRRD Connectivity Strategy, staff will be able to start developing a work plan and budget implications, for the Board's consideration in development of the 2022 annual budget.

## PRRD Connectivity Strategy Recommendations

The following are the high-level recommendations that form the Connectivity Strategy.

1. That the Regional Board authorize an Internet Performance Speed Test Campaign to achieve accurate and up to date internet speed test data for the region. **IN PROGRESS**
2. That the Regional Board pursue a 'hybrid' model of governance for PRRD owned Broadband infrastructure, in partnership with a private wholesale operator.
3. That the Regional Board develop connectivity projects and proposals that will leverage funding from public and private partners.

4. That the Regional Board establish a Broadband Internet and Mobility Standing Committee to expand upon the work of the FWG and the PRRD Connectivity Strategy. **COMPLETED**
5. That the Regional Board develop a connectivity work plan, identifying timelines and deliverables for the proposed recommendations in the PRRD Connectivity Strategy. **IN PROGRESS**
6. That the Regional Board engage stakeholders to identify all broadband requirements across the district and identify those stakeholders that may play a role as consumers or providers of such services. **DEALT WITH IN REPORT ADM-BIMC-001**
7. That the Regional Board engage with Broadband Internet and mobility providers operating within the PRRD to communicate service needs, identify gaps, and maximize their role in fulfilling the PRRD's Broadband vision. **DEALT WITH IN REPORT ADM-BIMC-001**
8. That the Regional Board update policies, bylaws and official community plans to incorporate connectivity principles, and support for Broadband deployment.
9. That the Regional Board investigate the ability to develop and implement a 'Dig Once' policy for the PRRD.
10. That the Regional Board advocate to the Federal Government to develop a national 'Dig Once' strategy that coordinates with both provincial and local governments.
11. That the Regional Board determine what role the PRRD has when it comes to Broadband and Mobility Infrastructure approvals (i.e zoning), and review the development approval processes. **DEALT WITH IN REPORT DR-BIMC-001**
12. That the Regional Board advocate to the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure to increase resources dedicated to reviewing and processing right of way permit applications for Broadband Infrastructure deployment.
13. That the Regional Board engage with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure to review their application and permitting process for Broadband Infrastructure deployment to see if it can be simplified.
14. That the Regional Board advocate to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs to amend the Local Government Act to allow regional districts to operate, construct, or maintain Broadband Internet or Broadband Infrastructure without requiring elector consent.
15. That the Regional Board advocate to the federal government for an early release of 3800MHz to compensate for the limited spectrum availability in 3500MHz.
16. That the Regional Board advocate to the federal government to ensure that spectrum allocations are within the same spectrum block to reduce cost of connectivity deployment initiatives.
17. That the Regional Board advocate to the federal government to implement a 'use it or lose it' policy to ensure that rural spectrum allocations are deployed.

18. That the Regional Board advocate to the federal government to update their spectrum pricing model, and base it on population served.
19. That the Regional Board create a Broadband Levy fee to fund connectivity initiatives.
20. That the Regional Board undertake an elector approval process to create a regional connectivity service function to support a PRRD transport network. **DEALT WITH IN REPORT ADM-BIMC-003**
21. That the Regional Board undertake an elector approval process to create individual service functions for areas where last mile initiatives will be deployed. **DEALT WITH IN REPORT ADM-BIMC-003**
22. That the Regional Board authorize the preparation of 'shovel-ready' last mile connectivity proposals so that the PRRD can apply for federal and provincial grant funding as opportunities are available.
23. That the Regional Board advocate to the federal and provincial government to commit to long-term and predictable funding for Broadband Infrastructure in rural and remote communities.
24. That the Regional Board advocate to the federal government to realign grant funding programs for communities with an urban core of less than 10,000 residents, which is aligned with Statistics Canada's definition of rural and small town areas.
25. That the Regional Board engage the market to start building backhaul throughout the District where a lack of such backhaul is resulting in communities continuing to be unserved and under-served from a broadband and mobility service perspective.

**ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS:**

1. That the Broadband Internet and Mobility Committee provide further direction.

**STRATEGIC PLAN RELEVANCE:**

- ☒ Advocacy
  - ☒ Increased broadband connectivity for rural communities - Situational/Gap Analysis and Investment

**FINANCIAL CONSIDERATION(S):**

None at this time.

**COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATION(S):**

None at this time.

**OTHER CONSIDERATION(S):**

This report is in line with the following recommendation from the draft PRRD Connectivity Strategy Report:

That the Regional Board develop a connectivity work plan, identifying timelines and deliverables for the proposed recommendations in the PRRD Connectivity Strategy.

Attachments:

1. Draft PRRD Connectivity Strategy Report – Version 2 – May 2021