



**Comments for the record  
United States Senate  
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation**

**by**

**Myron P. Naneng, Sr., President of AVCP  
Regarding Broadband**

**April 5, 2011**

Testimony to Senate Commerce Committee on Potential Broadband Impacts in Rural Alaska.

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and members of the Senate Commerce Committee. I thank you for this opportunity to share my views on potential impacts, more for the positive what broadband will do in rural Alaska. My name is Myron P. Naneng, Sr., President of Association of Village Council Presidents, representing 56 villages on the Yukon/Kuskokwim Delta, an area the size of the State of Oregon. I am a member of the State of Alaska Broadband Task Force, representing Alaska Federation of Natives, a Statewide Alaska Native Organization. I have also served as Chairman of a telephone company that provided local exchange, cellular and internet services, United Utilities, Inc., from 1980 to 2008, when we sold the company. I am providing copies of letters from AFN to Department of Commerce as part of the testimony to the committee.

If cell phone service and usage is any indication of the need for connectivity in rural villages today, it was proven with the large demand by people in many villages. The cell phone provider was not prepared for the high percentage of users in the initial stages. Broadband has a potential of making a bigger impact. It will enable users to obtain information quicker and make information available that was not available even 5 years ago. Today people want to be connected. I have a 3 year old grand daughter who can proficiently use the i-touch. This is the wave of today and the future, and is quite amazing considering there was only one phone in each village for the villagers to share in the early 70's. Communication trends have been changing for the better, and the opportunities that come with it are embraced by all. Improved connectivity provides users with information on educational, training and business opportunities as well as current world wide events. Information on jobs and opportunities that young people can apply for will be at their fingertips. This is going to create an information flow that is not available today in many villages and we all know this is the preferred method of communication for all young people.

In rural Alaska, the only way to travel to most villages is by small airplanes operated by hub based carriers. When a health emergency occurs, the villages have health aides who are the first responders and who communicate with health professionals, doctors, nurses or counselors when they encounter a health situation.

An expanded bandwidth of broadband will be provided better connectivity, thereby better communication between the regional hospitals or even major hospitals in cities to support the village health care systems – many of which have telemedicine communication systems. Many of the regional health corporations have established subregional clinics in the Y/K delta, the Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation has five subregional clinics that extend throughout the region. These subregional health clinics have doctors and other professional health care providers who support the villages in surrounding areas. Even these regional clinics utilize the telemedicine communication systems to talk through the diagnosis of symptoms of those they are administering health care to.

Broadband with the expansion of bandwidth will also allow schools to expand the educational and training opportunities of the students in school, especially in villages that are not meeting the No Child Left Behind requirements. Educational programs and other training opportunities that would not be available to students in rural communities because of remoteness or size will be available thru broadband. Most of the students in villages, even though they graduate from high school and continue onto higher education institutions still have to take remedial courses to prepare for college. We see the implementation of broadband reduce this requirement and give more students an opportunity to succeed in courses they take in universities or training courses.

Adults who may not be able to travel to universities due to family and or other reasons can take educational courses through the expanded system from accredited colleges that offer courses through the internet. Nowadays, we are seeing more young people getting their education by staying home and taking courses through the internet. There are also many employer sponsored training opportunities that can be delivered electronically if the infrastructure is in place. Again, the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta is the size of Oregon and there are no roads in rural Alaska so the cost of everything is really really expensive. To get training we have to travel first to a regional HUB (Bethel, St Marys, Aniak) then on to Anchorage and further if the training is out of state. The cost of a round trip ticket from any one of our villages to Bethel can range from \$150 - \$900 – and that is just to Bethel. So consider the opportunities that will come with increased broad band width and connectivity.

Another consideration is the fact that in Rural Alaska there is no choice of provider and the connection is weak. We currently do not have cell phone and internet connection in many remote parts of Alaska and where we do the signal is not strong, resulting in many lost calls or no connectivity. Because we have no choice in providers we are limited to the provider of the service area and are at the mercy of the provider with regard to options, plan design and cost.

For many villages and their leaders, the ability to identify funding which can be used for village purposes will be a major step for economic sustainability. Jobs can be created with this new technology, that otherwise does not exist today. Grant submissions to granting agencies, especially now with the requirements to submit grants via internet or paperless is hindering many

of our villages to submit grant applications and finance reporting today. Some have lost opportunities, so broadband will make it easier for villages and even regional organizations, such as AVCP to submit grant applications before deadlines occur. This will create infrastructure expansion for both villages and regional entities that are working with villages and create more job opportunities that currently does not exist in many villages.

We see benefits to broadband and expansion of bandwidth, the positive changes it will bring and provide opportunities in getting information and expanding local economies in villages. The potential uses in search and rescue operations, the telecommunication for health services and education in schools.

Broadband expansion will also help in providing law enforcement with a better means of communication between Village Public Safety Officers, who lead search and rescue operations and other law enforcement duties with other law enforcement personnel.

A child from one of the European countries can most likely communicate with a Yupik', Cupik' or Athabascan child from a rural Alaska village. They might learn from our children that we don't have iced piped sewer systems, or igloos, and that honey buckets are still in use in villages that cause health concerns in villages that don't have water and sewer systems that are taken for granted in most of the United States communities.

Maybe, our leaders in Congress and Oval office will realize that many Americans still lack the infrastructure that can improve the quality of life for Americans who live in rural Alaska, broadband will bring things into real time views, and not just from Discovery Channel of Alaska shows but by direct communications with real people.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and providing a short summary of what we anticipate will make a difference in rural Alaska and villages, that we know will make a bigger impact on educating not only those who live in rural Alaska, but those who live in urban America as well.

Quyana, Thank you.