

ACONA Meeting Notes - January 24, 2012 - Community Room, Altadena Library

After introductions, the following topics were covered:

Cell towers

Rich Roche, External Affairs Director, AT&T

Linda Paul, Ted Tsagris, T-Mobile

Tim O'Malley, Manager, System Performance, Inland Empire, Verizon Wireless

AT&T: Wireless keeps growing; many consumers are now wireless-only (26.6% of homes in 2010). One in five landline users have switched to wireless only. 247 billion emails, 90 million tweets, sent every day over the AT&T network. Wireless is only wireless to the cell tower; after that it's on fiber. Antennas need to overlap coverage to provide good service. AT&T is working hard to fill any gaps in wireless coverage and capacity. AT&T had a proposal in to put in a cell tower on Loma Alta. It was supported by the Altadena Town Council, The LA regional planning commission approved it. The county supervisors denied the application. AT&T is again looking for a location to put in a tower in Altadena. AT&T is working with the community to build support.

Verizon: The switching centers from different carriers are interconnected, also connected to the Internet and 911 services. Wireless signal in both directions has to be strong enough to provide good connection. The location of a cell site is important, particularly in markets where there is already coverage. Signals don't travel well through buildings, trees, etc., and cannot go through mountains and hills. Antenna height is important. 70-ft antennas provide better coverage than 35-ft antennas. 911 calls over wireless can pinpoint the location of the call if the signal is good. Wireless data demand is growing. Need partnership between wireless carriers, local jurisdictions and communities.

T-Mobile: It takes a lot to get a cell site built. Can take 12-24 months. Radio frequency engineer identifies need for a cell site, issues a map showing the location. Carrier tries to find a civic site as close to the center of that location as possible. Setting up cell towers is analogous to setting up a watering system for an irregularly shaped yard. Suitable property: willing landlord, space for equipment, adequate power, meets zoning codes, accessible for construction. Approval may take 4-6 months in some jurisdictions; in LA County it can take up to 18 months. Designs are made to be as unobtrusive as possible. Structures have to meet building codes and require permits. Fifty percent of younger people are wireless-only.

Q about VHF and its ability to provide better service. A: VHF will help capacity, but not coverage.

Comment: Microcell technology: AT&T already has for household use. Cost is about \$200.

Pasadena Post Office closure: How it affects Altadena

Phillip Warlick, Michael Evans, American Postal Workers Union of California

Lease on the Altadena PO may be up in 4 years. USPS says the lease will be up in "less than 10 years" and that when the lease is up they will be looking for a smaller location.

90 billion pieces of mail delivered last year, more than FedEx and UPS. USPS is closing the Mac Robinson (Lincoln Ave.) mail processing center in Pasadena. The public owns the postal service and its facilities (Constitution Section 8 Clause 7: "[Congress shall have the power] to establish Post Offices and post Roads."). USPS told Congress that a study to remove outgoing mail processing in Pasadena "will be initiated" but the study had already been done. Outgoing mail processing was removed from Pasadena in 2006.

Joe Brown: Deadline is tomorrow to register protests about the Mac Robinson closure.

Altadena Shake-out Drill

Steve Reagan, Block Captain, New York at Allen

Needs: Coordinating committee, communications model, hierarchy of responsibility (Adults taking care of dependents, Watch - move out to neighborhood and assess, communication with Sheriff and Fire to request resources; identify any gaps and fill them)

Practice and drill: do it every year, on a day when the majority of people are home; if ten percent can participate, they can protect the other 90%, identify resources in your immediate neighborhood.

Discussion

Follow-up on concerns re Altadena Sheriff's dispatch: Sheriffs did follow up with those who had concerns, but there were still issues. Sheriffs have a committee that investigates; they say they find no problem. Several individuals have filed grievances. One individual who reported an incident had the deputy point a firearm at him. When he complained, the committee said that the deputy had done nothing inappropriate. The ramifications are that if future incidents occur, the citizens will not report them because they are not confident that the Sheriffs will respond appropriately. An audience member stated that he would hesitate to call after the way he was treated. For this ACONA meeting, Sheriff's explicitly said they would not attend. LA Times has run stories about problems with law enforcement leadership. Captain McLean stated to Steve Reagan that his policy is that if you file a complaint, you will be responded to. Steve has found that, so far, that isn't true.