

“Do Not Pass Go” Screening Packet

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“Do Not Pass Go”

Welcome to a special screening of the film by Cullen Hoback
Here’s the backstory, from Next Century Cities and the Institute for Local
Self-Reliance

“Do Not Collect \$200”

The documentary “Do Not Pass Go” features the city of Wilson, North Carolina and neighboring Pinetops. After Wilson’s repeated requests for improved broadband were denied by the big cable company, they built their own fiber-optic network. Time Warner Cable and other big monopoly companies spent more than \$1 million in lobbying to convince North Carolina to ban such networks. Nonetheless, Wilson’s Greenlight municipal fiber network has achieved all of its goals and then some, bringing jobs to the community, lowering bills, and meeting all its debt obligations.

This film explores one avenue for communities to improve their Internet access - building and operating a citywide network offering Internet access directly to all residents and businesses. It also explores the lengths that opponents of municipal networks -- especially the largest cable and telephone companies -- will go to.

Background

Municipal Network:

The county, city, or town owns the Internet network infrastructure. These networks often operate as municipal utilities, much like water or electric, but may operate through a variety of models. Some serve residents, as in Pinetops and Wilson, while others only offer better connectivity to local businesses or municipal facilities. Still others operate purely as infrastructure and allow independent providers to use the infrastructure as a way to offer services to the local community. See [this fact sheet for some of the more common muni fiber models](#). This fact sheet offers information about [common financing models](#).

Telephone or Electric Cooperatives:

Member-owned cooperatives fund, build, and manage fiber networks as extensions of their pre-existing telecommunications infrastructure and service. Cooperative solutions tend to be more practical in more rural geographies.

Public-Private Partnership:

Partnerships are a much discussed, rarely implemented option. Many local governments would prefer to find a partner they can trust that will share the risk and reward of a network but such partners are rare in the current climate. Though the term partnership is frequently used to cover a variety of arrangements, it should be reserved for situations in which both parties share some risk and reward in a project. The [Westminster / Ting partnership in Maryland](#) is a good model.

Advantages of Community Networks

1. Local accountability for an essential service.
2. Improved connectivity of municipal institutions including utilities, schools, hospitals, and libraries.
3. Revitalized local economies, increased entrepreneurship, and a healthier business climate
4. Reduced residential prices with that money being reinvested in the community.
5. Increased competition, potentially multiple times over with [open access](#).
6. Faster, more reliable connectivity from the latest technology.
7. Local customer service rather than call centers in distant states or countries.

Current Considerations

The current Federal Communications Commission is heavily tilted toward the big cable, telephone, and wireless monopolies. It has repealed privacy protections for subscribers and network neutrality regulations. These actions are harmful to residents and local businesses, that just want to use the

Internet, not deal with new toll booths or schemes by monopolies to raise their prices.

Community networks are governed locally and the vast majority will continue to operate along open access principles even if not compelled to because they are focused on maximizing local benefits, not revenues for distant shareholders.

As you watch the film, consider whether you think your local government should take action. To learn about all the many options available, visit MuniNetworks.org or NextCenturyCities.org. To join the effort to protect municipal networks, join the Coalition for Local Internet Choice.

How To Organize a Screening

The video is not yet available for wide distribution. But you can order either a Blu-ray or DVD for a small fee or get a code to stream it via Vimeo at no charge. Email - liam@hyraxfilms.com - to make arrangements and feel free to contact us with questions or concerns broadband@muninetworks.org.

Program

Don't just show people the short documentary and walk away. There's a lot that can be learned from the story of Pinetops and the Wilson Greenlight fiber network. This screening should prompt a discussion about local issues.

Plan for the event to run at least an hour to show the documentary and have a discussion.

Plan to reserve your location for up to 3 hours.

First Hour	Check into space Set up any tables or chairs Set up audio/video equipment Put out snacks, water, etc.
Second Hour	15 minutes - wait for folks to arrive 25 minutes - show documentary 20 minutes - discussion
Third Hour	Wrap up discussion Clean up space

Consider showing more videos about community networks and the importance of 21st century connectivity. MuniNetworks published a video on Ammon, Idaho's award-winning network. More videos are available here at various lengths: <https://muninetworks.org/content/videos>

Location

Choose a place with good audio/video equipment. That could be your home, a church, a community center, or a library.

- Choose a location that is easy for people to find and wheelchair accessible.
- Make sure that you have someone to help with technical setup.
- Find out if you have to set up chairs and tables on your own.
- Book the room for about an hour before your event starts and an hour after your event ends. This gives you time to become familiar with the space and do any set up or clean up.
- Find out if the location allows outside food/drink.
- If you intend to do more small group discussion at the end of the screening, choose a location that also offers small tables where people can sit, write, and discuss.

Libraries

These often have good audio/video equipment. You will likely have to put out chairs in a community room, unless they have a lecture hall.

Town Halls

They may have audio/video equipment. You will likely have to set up the tables and chairs yourself.

Churches

They usually have good audio/video equipment. You may be able to use the worship hall and sit in pews. You may also be able to use a community hall and put out chairs.

Colleges / Universities

They should have good audio/video equipment and someone to help you set it up. You should also have easy access to chairs and tables. You may have to pay a small fee to use the space unless you are a student group.

Coffee Shops/Craft Breweries/Local Bookstores

These may have small back rooms that you can rent cheaply or for free. These do not usually have good audio/video equipment - You may have to bring your own projector.

Outreach

Expect that only a quarter of the people you invite to show up. Things come up, and people get busy.

Best Practices in a Rural Community:

- Word of mouth is the most effective. Call up your neighbors to invite them to the screening and encourage them to invite others.
- Put up flyers in local businesses and talk to the owners about the screening.
- Facebook events are less effective, but many people now use smartphones that send push notifications.

Best Practices in an Urban Area:

- Word of Mouth is still the most effective. If you can, work with a nonprofit that specializes in local outreach - they may have a list of people that they can call who have already marked that they are interested in the digital divide or economic justice.
- Put up flyers in local businesses and talk to the owners about the screening.
- Facebook events tend to be more effective in large cities. People will often share the event with their friends list.

Time/Date

Make sure that you choose a date that works with your communities' schedule. If everyone goes to church on Wednesday nights, don't plan the screening that same night.

Date

Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday evenings often work best because people may already be booked for the weekend.

Event Time

Don't schedule an event to start at 5pm (or whenever your local rush hour time is). People likely need to drive from their job to your event.

After

Consider whether there is a core group of people that should plan future meetings to discuss additional events or organizing around improving Internet access locally.

Discussion Questions

Choose discussion questions based on what makes sense for your community. This is just a guided resource. Focus on moving the community forward. **Don't just complain about the existing options** - the goal is to develop building blocks to bring better Internet access to your community.

What make sense for your community?

- If you are organizing this screening as a city function or if you have a supportive local government, focus on **community needs**, and **community power** sections
- If you are organizing this screening as part of a community group, focus on **community needs**, **community power**, and **making change** sections. here are some resources on how to organize the grassroots groups in your community
- If you are an individual organizing this screening, focus on the **community needs**, **community power**, and **grassroots growth** sections.

Does your state restrict local Internet choice? [List of state barriers](#) [pdf]

Community Needs

What are the broadband Internet access needs in the community?

Are they being met?

Households

What about middle-income households?

What about low-income households?

Businesses

Are businesses able to get what they need to compete?

What do small businesses need to grow and thrive?

Schools

Do schoolchildren have the connectivity they need to do their homework?

Do the schools have the resources they need?

Privacy

Does your current Internet Service Provider protect your information?

Are you confident that your Internet Service Provider will not violate net neutrality?

Community Power

What local assets are available if Internet access is lacking?

Is there...

- a city electric utility?
- a local telephone or electric cooperative?
- a good local Internet Service Provider?
- a well-run IT Department in local government?

Are there upcoming projects (replacing streets, putting in smart transportation devices, etc) that could be used to expand Internet infrastructure at low cost?

What do you see as barriers to improving Internet access in our community?

Grassroots Growth

Where can we pull people from in our communities to grow our group?

Are there existing organizations we should work with?

What barriers exist to grow this movement? Apathy? Non-ideological alignment?

Making Change

What did you think of the lawmaker's response in the video?

Do you think your lawmaker would respond in the same way?

What do you think makes your lawmaker view this issue in this way?

Action Steps

Don't let momentum slip away!

Organizing groups around policy issues:

If you haven't already, start a weekly or monthly group to continue the discussion and find solutions for your community. There are many ways to organize this kind of group.

Broadband And Beers - Colorado

[\[https://www.broadbandbeers.com/\]](https://www.broadbandbeers.com/)

This is a loose collection of individuals that get together to discuss broadband in their community and support local craft breweries.

Give a Sh!t! - Minneapolis, Minnesota

[\[https://www.facebook.com/giveashitmpls/\]](https://www.facebook.com/giveashitmpls/)

This group organizes events and distribute information to get out the vote and teach people about the democratic process. They created a website about local candidates on the issues, made videos explaining Ranked Choice Voting, and created trainings on how to vote.

Transit on Tap - Hillsboro, Oregon

[\[http://trimet.org/ontap/\]](http://trimet.org/ontap/)

This group organizes panel discussions over a pint of beer. A local bar or craft brewery will host, and everyone enjoys the panels of experts chatting about the importance of transportation.

If your community is supportive...

Talk with your city council about taking action and organize to create concrete support for new policies.

Example: NC Hearts Gigabit - North Carolina

This group is an offshoot of Charlotte Hearts Gigabit - a grassroots effort of entrepreneurs and tech enthusiasts. Charlotte Hearts Gigabit was a

driving force to convince the city of Charlotte to take action and work with Google Fiber.

Educate your local officials with case studies and fact sheets from MuniNetworks.org. Your local officials need encouragement to take some of the next steps to improve broadband access:

- Have public meetings about current Internet access

- Learn from neighboring cities and comparable cities around the U.S. about what they have done

- Hire a consultant who has worked in communities like yours

- Do a feasibility study on what your community can do right now

Have your community join [Next Century Cities](#), a membership organization of communities working for fast, affordable, reliable broadband

If your state has barriers to cooperative or municipal networks...

Talk to your state elected officials

Form a state chapter of the Coalition for Local Internet Choice (CLIC)

[\[http://www.localnetchoice.org/\]](http://www.localnetchoice.org/)

Your Public Officials

Regardless of the status of your community or your state, your elected officials need to hear how important broadband Internet access is in your life.

Here's how you can contact your Congressional representatives:

Phone: (202) 224-3121

Email:

- For Senate [\[http://bit.ly/1ujDDoD\]](http://bit.ly/1ujDDoD)

- For House [\[http://bit.ly/2jE77BE\]](http://bit.ly/2jE77BE)

You can find your state legislators here:

[\[https://www.congress.gov/state-legislature-websites\]](https://www.congress.gov/state-legislature-websites)

Talk to your local officials, let them know that you want your community to take the next step to improve broadband access. The top three things:

- 1) Public meetings about current Internet access, including local mapped testimony
- 2) A conversation with a consultant who has worked in communities like yours
- 3) A feasibility study on what your community can do right now, along with a timeline

Finally, if you're looking for help or for further information on starting your own grassroots broadband group, feel free to email the Institute for Local Self-Reliance at broadband@muninetworks.org.