

Internet 'map' big waste of taxpayers' money

Call it a phony issue with an expensive solution. Typical government work.

Congress put \$350 million in the "stimulus" bill to pay for a national map of Internet availability, with the emphasis on where customers can and cannot get broadband, or high-speed, service.

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration says it will spend \$100 million just to see what needs to be done to create a map. States, sensing blood in these pork-infested waters, have asked for \$107 million to map their own territories, plus \$26 million for "related" projects.

And when the state maps are done, of course, there'll be millions to spend on collating them into a national map.

All to learn that we've used up a whole lot of money to find out that most of the country, nearly everyone in towns big enough to have cable, already have access to broadband Internet. Farmers and others in rural areas sometimes do not, but alpha wireless and satellite services are catching up with this need, too.

North Carolina officials, on the other hand, say it cost them only about \$275,000 per year to keep up a detailed map of Internet service in their state. One consultant calls \$350 million a "ridiculous" amount of money to spend on this project. He said his firm could do the job for about \$3.5 million. Another expert put the reasonable cost at under \$30 million.

Of course, the map won't be ready when the

government starts giving out stimulus money this fall for broadband projects, or formulation of a national broadband policy by the Federal Communications Commission.

Officials estimate that a good two-thirds of American homes have broadband service already, with high-speed service available to perhaps 90 percent of all U.S. homes. One survey showed that most people who don't have broadband in those areas simply don't want to spend the money.

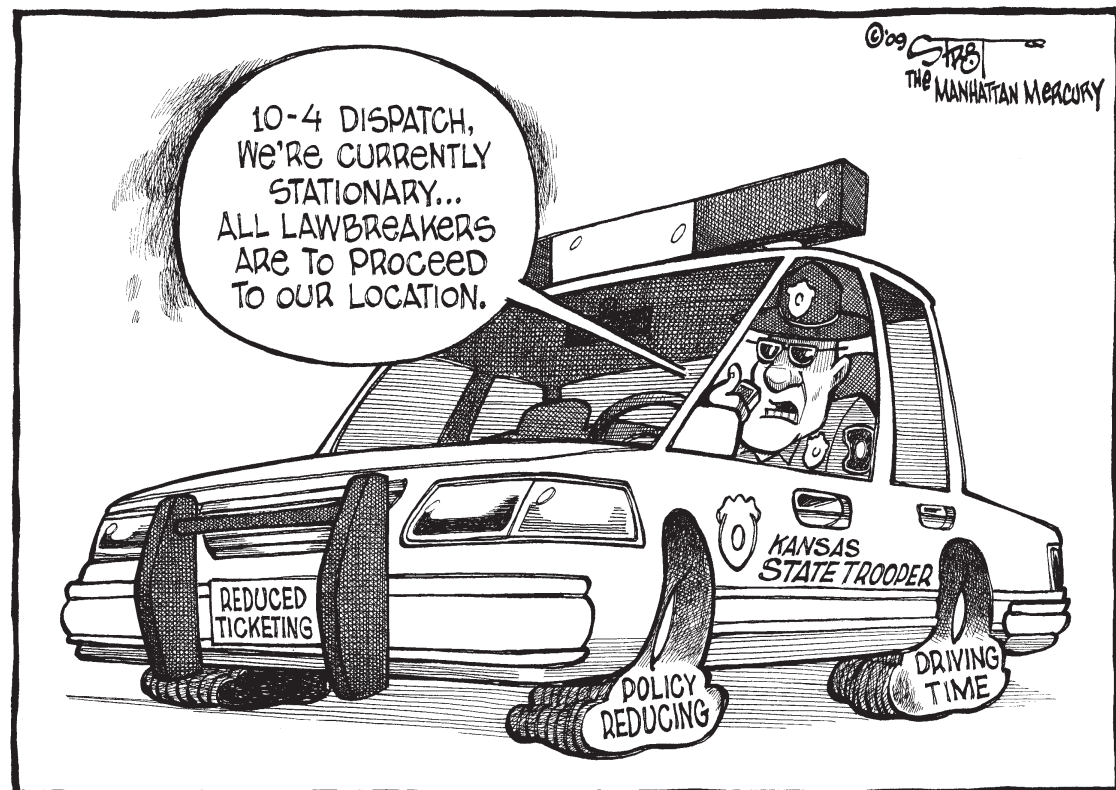
Politicians cry that the U.S. is falling behind the rest of the world in Internet access, but the existing patchwork of private enterprise and cooperative providers seems, in fact, to have done a pretty good job.

Most efforts by states to expand service have wound up spending tax money that could have been put to better use somewhere else. If Congress is really concerned about rural folks, it might want to put a few million into research on ways to get wireline broadband to areas now beyond the reach of ordinary "DSL" lines used in towns and cities.

The Rural Utilities Service, part of the Department of Agriculture, might give priority to loans for people who will wire rural areas or install wireless systems to serve farm homes.

There are some needs out there. But \$350 million for a map? Come on.

The government has got better things to do. — *Steve Haynes*



Roof came down on garden

"The sky is falling! The sky is falling!"

I could practically hear the screams coming from my side garden as the roofers removed the old shingles and tossed them over the side of the house.

Remember that big hail storm last year? Have you noticed that almost every house in town seemed to be getting a new roof last summer or this?

Well, the adjuster came out and said our roof was toast, although it hadn't started to leak yet. That was about 18 months ago.

The same thing happened about 15 years ago. There was a big hail storm. The insurance company paid off and it took so long to re-roof this house that it was sold and the former owners gave us the money to put on a new roof.

It's not hard to understand why we always seem to be the last on the roofing list.

Our house is tall and it goes straight up like a teenager in a growth spurt. The roof is high and steep and has lots of angles. No one wants to get up there and work, and I don't blame them, but we gotta have a new roof before



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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we wake up some morning with a puddle in the middle of the bedroom and a dripping ceiling.

Last time the roof got a redo, the insurance company refused to pay to have more than one layer of the old shingles removed. They said the roofers should just put on another layer.

So this time when the insurance guy said rip it to the base and put on all new, it's been like taking wallpaper off the wall of a very old house. You can see lots of layers and patterns as things are stripped away. It also means that there is a lot of junk coming off our roof and landing in the yard, because there is no way to get a dump truck close enough to just shove it in.

Down on the ground, I have a small garden plot right next to the house. So, while much of the junk

landed on the grass, the garden also got pelted.

I came home after work and immediately dug out my green beans. The broccoli and zucchini were impossibly buried but I was tired of broccoli and had more zucchini in the main garden, so I wasn't worried about them.

I'm happy to report that after the sky fell and the debris cleared, the green beans were only slightly injured. Their guardian nasturtiums are about half gone, as are the broccoli plants.

The zucchini, which had been crawling out into the yard, has retreated to the garden. It is curled up like a sleeping dog and blooming its head off, which just goes to show, even dropping a house on zucchini vines won't get you out of having a surplus of squash.

Hot him, cold her butt heads

And, the battle begins again. The battle over the thermostat, I mean.

This little cold snap brought it on, and it seems to be getting worse as we get older. Jim is hot when I'm cold. And, then he'll be cold when I'm hot. He's pulling on covers while I'm kicking them off. Then sometimes he's opening windows and doors while I sit shivering.

I know one thing: it's going to make our "golden years" a real challenge.

-ob-

An old, old friend has come home to live with us. He's very good looking and has gotten better with age. All he does is hang around all day.

Before the rumor mill goes into high gear, I should explain. My old friend is a painting my mother had commissioned by an artist friend as a memorial to my dad after his death.

It was of a prairie windmill standing beside a stock tank, and I loved that picture. It had been on loan to a local cafe when it closed for a few years. When remodeling began on the building, I thought I'd best



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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retrieve the picture. It's no worse for the wear, and looks very comfortable among my other windmill collectibles.

-ob-

Mexico is on our minds, again. A trip to Juarez is planned for the last week of October. Now, I know some of you are going to say it's too dangerous, what with all the drug lords killing each other and everything.

But, seriously, out in the poor parts of town where we work, no one can afford to buy drugs, so there's no problem. We have been assured by the ministry group we work with that most of what we hear is "media hype." The ministry workers tell us they have not had any problems and

would never send us anywhere they felt was unsafe.

Heavens, you're probably in more danger walking down a street in any major city than we will be in Mexico. Besides, as Christians, shouldn't we trust God for our protection? We can't let fear keep us from doing His work.

From the Bible

Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.
II John 8

Visitors help our economy

To the Editor:

We had an interesting experience recently when a family from Basehor, in Leavenworth County near Kansas City, stayed with us overnight.

We had met this family several times when visiting our daughter and her family near Leavenworth. The father mentioned that he'd like to bring his family out here hunting sometime. They had never been to Oberlin before.

A few weeks later, the family called to ask if they could stop in Oberlin on Sept. 15 to see us, visit the Last Indian Raid burial site and maybe hunt some doves. Of course, we welcomed this opportunity!

The total stay was less than 21 hours, but was an interesting experience for me. They spent quite some time outside soaking up the view, made many comments about the beauty of this area, the nature around us, the open skies and the peace experienced in the pasture while watching for doves.

They all got to shoot until they ran out of shells. I was amazed that they saw, enjoyed and appreciated so much! I guess we all have a tendency to take these things for granted when we are around them.

Before departure, they wanted to fill with gas, see the burial site and add a stop at Dale's Fish 'n' Fun. This was an eye opener to me concerning the value of attracting visitors to our community. The first stop, they took enough gasoline that the credit card stopped filling at \$75.

The next stop was at Dale's. He was looking for a certain kind and size of bullet. Bob pulled out a case and removed a box for him to inspect. The guest said, "I'll take the whole case!" Following this, he saw a pistol that a friend of his was looking for. The price was right, so he bought it. Next, one of his sons found a gun he really wanted and told his dad it is even cheaper than at Cabelas. They bought it!

This went on for about an hour as they bought more items. Between the food, gasoline, sporting goods and flowers, they left nearly \$1,000 here in that short time.

I know every visitor is not exactly like this, but I'm sure they would have spent even more if they had planned on spending a couple of days here.

Before going to the burial site, I asked if they had just a little more time to take a ride to downtown Oberlin. They agreed. They told me we had a beautiful hospital, too. I

Letters to the Editor

asked if they had gone by it. He said, "No, but I saw it on the sign along the highway."

He was impressed that we will soon have a community center with the bowling, theater and all. We tried to briefly point out all businesses along the way down Penn Avenue. He liked the brick streets and the community as a whole, commenting, "This would be a peaceful place to live."

As we passed the Museum, he said he only wished they had time to go through it in detail. The family read the entire informational sheets posted at the cemetery, were touched by the information and hope to return sometime to spend more time at the museum and other places in Oberlin.

Many of you have had similar experiences, which confirm:

- We need all the visitors and guests we can attract to help keep our Main Street alive.
- We need business activity in and around this community to keep dollars turning over and over.
- We need children to keep schools going, therefore young families and jobs to support young families.
- We need to take advantage of any federal or state programs which create business activity and jobs, especially if the program requires the community to fund only 5 percent of the total.

With an investment of only 5 percent, it's hard to imagine any-

thing but positive possibilities for business and the community by approving the airport expansion, along with other reasonable projects to keep this community alive and thriving. Anything like this will create business activity during and after construction. In addition, the project will become a permanent part of the community, which should open up many spin-off possibilities to attract new business activities and finance maintenance while keeping business and people here.

What would you do individually if someone told you that you are at the right place, at the right time and have the right talent to make a \$100,000 project work and the donor is so sure of its success, they would offer to give you \$95,000 if you'll come up with \$5,000 to give it a try? And, by the way, you won't have to repay the \$95,000; it's a gift or grant. Also, if you decide not to accept this, it may never again be available, and certainly will not be available to you again for a minimum of 10 years.

A popular message in recent years is "Freedom Is Not Free," and most everyone knows a thriving community is not free either. It takes aggressiveness, hard work, openness, honesty, leadership with the community at heart, good successful management and some risk. In most cases, the risk is much greater than 5 percent.

John Juenemann, Oberlin

Graduate looks at progress

To the Editor:

It's hard to understand why a few of the good people of Oberlin are against progress. The airport project comes to mind.

I do hope they can and are willing to see the impact it would have on

"our" town and will not continue to stop progress.

Della Roe
1948 DCHS graduate
Long Beach, Calif.

Write

The Oberlin Herald encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of public interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

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