

Ed Lazowska's Gig.U remarks

I'd like to begin by thanking Mayor Mike McGinn for his leadership on this issue.

- When we were working to situate Facebook in Seattle, Mike was there.
- When we were helping Isilon Systems to relocate in the city so that it could double its workforce, Mike was there.
- When it was important to increase the availability of broadband in Pioneer Square to revitalize that area, Mike was there.
- Today is another example.

I'd also like to thank University of Washington President Michael Young for embracing the role of the University in providing leadership to help advance competitiveness, and in continuing a long partnership between the University of Washington and the City of Seattle.

We all understand that broadband is an increasingly essential aspect of all citizen's lives:

- We use it to learn, and to shop.
- We use it for entertainment, and to access government services, and to communicate.
- It's how businesses operate, and it's the backbone of scientific discovery.
- Increasingly, it will be central to health care, and to home energy efficiency.

America invented broadband. But we are no longer a world leader in its availability. This is going to kill our competitiveness.

It's not unlike K-12 education, or health care.

- There are deniers – people who claim that America still leads the world.
- But the facts clearly demonstrate otherwise.

Consider just a few of those facts:

- Among the 34 OECD nations, the United States ranks 15th in wired broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants – behind France, England, Germany, Canada, Korea, and ten other nations.
- And that's for a very low-speed definition of broadband: 256,000 bits per second.
- Among the 34 OECD nations, we rank 29th – fifth from last – in average advertised broadband download speed – *a factor of 6 slower* than the top nations.
- We rank 24th in the highest advertised broadband speed in major markets – *a factor of 20 slower* than the top nations.
- Our cost for truly high speed residential broadband – in those few places where you can get it – is the 5th most expensive among OECD nations – *a factor of 4 more expensive* than the best nations.

There are many ways to apologize, rationalize and explain. But the reality is that in countries that understand that broadband is critical infrastructure for the 21st century, proactive public policy supports strategies and tactics to drive 100 megabit or 1 gigabit services at the kinds of prices that we in the U.S. typically pay for 5-15 megabit highly asymmetric services today.

The commercial telecommunications sector in the U.S. has been enormously successful at arguing that we have a working competitive market that is providing exactly what consumers are willing to pay for, at prices they are willing to pay.

- But this is simply not the case.
- It's not true in Ballard, where I live.
- And it's not true across Seattle, and across this nation.

America needs more than this.

Gig.U is a movement – a movement led by Blair Levin, formerly of the FCC, and involving 37 major universities working in partnership with their surrounding municipalities.

Gig.U recognizes that every next generation of broadband, and every successful effort to reach the un-served and under-served, has come from this source – from universities and local governments, working in partnership.

In Seattle, the University of Washington's partnership with the City in broadband goes back more than two decades. Under Mayor McGinn's leadership, we're taking it to the next level.

What incentives would it would take to coax at least one provider to offer world-class services at affordable prices? How do we break out of the Catch 22 in which:

- the absence of decent broadband
- leads to an absence of advanced applications
- leads to a shortage of customers
- which justifies the absence of decent broadband

That's what we're trying to find out, in Seattle and across the nation.

The Gig.U movement is a national collaboration of research universities and their communities that is taking a bold step to address an issue of national competitiveness that is being taken on by the Federal government in other countries.

If the Gig.U movement succeeds, it will have helped the U.S. catch up in a way that is not happening on the current playing field.

Let's make it succeed here in Seattle.