Developing your Connectivity Plan

Description

Once your municipal council or regional board has identified connectivity as a strategic priority, the next step is to develop a connectivity plan to identify how and where connectivity will help your community achieve its development goals.

A connectivity plan involves understanding the needs of the community and working with partners to assess goals, assets, opportunities, and infrastructure. The purpose, scope, and objectives of the plan can vary depending on whether elected officials seek to understand:

- their options to influence connectivity expansion;
- current and future service demands to inform community planning; or
- which projects to prioritize based on their potential impact on community development.

Rationale

- Encourages dialogue and decisions regarding the strategic value of connectivity to the region
- Determines how and where connectivity will help your community achieve its development goals
- Promotes regional collaboration and cooperation

Outcome

An action-oriented connectivity plan or series of reports to help make informed decisions on connectivity expansion.

Types of Connectivity Plans

Connectivity planning is an iterative process that often requires going through many rounds of assessment, public engagement, and project scoping. There are different types of connectivity plans, and what plan needs to be developed will depend on where you are at in the connectivity planning process:

- **Infrastructure plan:** most often developed early in the planning process to better understand the current state of infrastructure, gaps, challenges faced by service providers, and options to address the gaps and challenges that have been identified. An infrastructure plan usually requires expert assistance to be developed.
- **Connectivity strategy:** a plan summarizing research on current and future needs to inform decision making. This includes technology use and demand drivers, digital scenarios, and implications for community planning. A connectivity strategy provides the context and background information for further planning (i.e., role of local government, policy changes, public-private partnership).
- **Connectivity plan:** A companion to the connectivity strategy that outlines specific actions that will be taken to carry out the strategy. This can be a stand-alone action plan, or a series of actions captured in existing community plans (i.e., Official Community Plan, economic development plans).
- **Project plan:** a plan detailing a specific infrastructure project. It is often required to satisfy program funding requirements.

Connectivity Plan – Overview of Sections

A viable solution to improve connectivity in your region consists of many necessary elements, from the right technology to a sustainable business model. Perhaps the most important one is developing a vision that can be supported by diverse members of the community. A connectivity plan describes your community's vision for better connectivity, the anticipated benefits, and the action plan necessary to carry out that vision. The following list provides an overview of suggested sections for your plan.

Background

What considerations have prompted the development of a connectivity plan? Who is the main sponsor of the connectivity plan? What are the overall goals of the connectivity plan?

Purpose, Scope, and Objectives

Derived from the background statement, this section frames the entire plan. It defines a clear purpose, the scope of the plan, and the objectives that it aims to achieve.

Approach

Describe the methodology that has been used to do the research, including the data that you used, how you collected your data, how you analyzed it, and the rationale for choosing these methods. It allows to establish the reliability and validity of the research and the recommendations that are made.

Context

Describe the area(s) being studied, from its geography to its demography. Include key features or unique civic facilities that helps to explain, illustrate, or illuminate the strategic position or opportunity that can be enhanced through connectivity.

Vision, Goals, and Priorities

Describe future expectations for the area(s) being studied. The vision and priorities tie the connectivity plan to community plans. They ensure that community needs drive the decisions and strategies on connectivity. They can be sourced from previous community planning and public engagement activities.

Findings

Describe the key conclusions emerging from the research and analysis that has been conducted. This includes a summary of current and future service demands, service needs, existing services, and emerging use. It is also useful to interpret the findings in the context of community priorities.

Proposed Projects

Describe the infrastructure projects that are needed to address the service needs and gaps.

Recommendations / Next Steps

Capture actions that local governments can take to further improve connectivity in their region. This can include policy development, advocacy, investment priorities, even further assessment.