

Palo Alto FTTH Survey: Text Response Summary

Introduction

In order to extract the specific recommendations and concerns expressed in the text question portion of the survey, each comment was placed in a table and the specific category(ies) commented upon were noted. The categories themselves were extracted from the comments and when a new category was mentioned, it was added to the table.

Since any one text response could mention one or *more* issues, the total number of mentions is greater than the number of people responding to the questions. In addition, the results should be viewed as relative only to the category that they apply to.

Each category also includes a typical response.

Text Question One

If you can envision an important or unique benefit that could result from extending fiber optic services to the home, please describe it here:

Responses to this question fell into three categories:

1. Comments about the desirability of services to be offered;
2. General comments about the structure of the service and/or Palo Alto's benefits from FTTH;
3. Dissatisfaction with current service providers

1. Service benefits

Advanced Services – 35

This category included a wide range of possible services including video conferencing, video phones, home servers and home control.

“Possibility of many local program providers, eg., Information, music, performance. Video and audio conferencing -- local and remote”

“For high-tech telecommuters, this would enable reliable corporate VoIP and videoconferencing. Also would position Palo Alto as a thought leader in the high-tech community.”

“Home health care. All communications for medical equipment, audio/video conferencing with doctors could be done from home. Same for education services for remote learning.”

Video On Demand – 8

“I think delivery of videos to the home - overnight in lieu of video rental and return could be a killer app.”

Broadband Service – 39

Many respondents simply pleaded for more, better or any at all.

“Break the telco stranglehold on broadband services.”

“Reliable, cost-effective, high speed internet access will truly change people's lives in many many ways.”

“Providing reliable, high speed data access to residents of Palo Alto will lead to increased telecommuting, thereby reducing traffic, air pollution, and road construction.”

“3 benefits: speed, speed, and speed.”

Cable TV – 12

“If the fiber were connected to the house, I would hope that I could subscribe to exactly the services that I want. Rather than some collection of TV channels, most of which I don't want, I could subscribe to only the channels which interest me.”

HDTV – 7

“The introduction of digital television will have a dramatic impact on how we view TV in the near future. HDTV requires bandwidth and the best source would be fiber optic cable.”

WiFi – 5

Several respondents suggested using FTTH as the basis for a community wireless network.

“Why stop at fiber optic. Why not use fiber optic to create a Palo Alto WiFi network? Works at home, works anywhere I go in Palo Alto. Works for anybody passing through?”

Telecommuting/Home Business – 22

“Currently depend on office system almost entirely. Would help immeasurably to have reliable system at home.”

Governmental benefits – 27

“On-line town hall meetings with participations by city residents.”

“... Local access to City Council minutes, records, etc. Direct connection to the library and its resources.”

Community benefits – 35

“more community involvement and better communications between members of our community. further enhance the desirability of living in palo alto.”

Health and safety benefits – 16

“There would be the potential for better communication with residents during disasters or emergencies, and for better communication in general.”

“Fiberoptic services would more easily allow face to face video communication, as well as data collection. Such real-time, eye to eye, voice to voice contact would significantly elevate the quality of information and understanding by patient and physician. Palo Alto could, also, continue to lead in the care of all of its citizens, including those least able to fend for themselves. Such a network could be similarly used for online visits between more healthy patients and their physicians, as well as provide the backbone for physician to physician communication and image transmission.”

School and education – 27

“and to the schools and connecting the home and school..... and broadening the educational opportunities for my children and incorporating this into the curriculum.”

Increased property values – 8

“We could attract more high-end employers and workers if we had a super-fast connection to every home, paid for like a utility, as this makes palo alto a more attractive location for business + homeowners. It would also raise up our property values... yay!”

Open access – 6

These respondents cited the desirability of allowing multiple providers on the system.

“Services: choice, competition, and reliability. An Information Utility would greatly decrease the barriers to entry for any service. Metaphorically, it is important to not have the taxi company own the road.”

Improved phone service – 5

“...I want to be able to choose Local phone service providers and gain access to many services only provided to business customers. Many PacBell phone customers only use the message center because two line roll-over is not available to residential customers. The City of Palo Alto and service providers could provide business grade telephone service....”

2. General and structural comments

Will enhance the stature of Palo Alto – 9

“I think it makes us a unique, progressive community to offer this service.”

“Any time that services can be brought to the local level, reliability and responsiveness tend to improve. SBC is based in San Antonio, Texas, and has no stake in our community. Palo Alto does an excellent job managing the utilities, and I've found the City to be very responsive. In addition -- this is the heart of Silicon Valley -- let's lead the way toward innovation around in-home/in-classroom bundled communications.”

Should be efficient/reliable/cost effective and businesslike – 11

“The city has to demonstrate EFFICIENT operational ability to be a credible service provider. This has largely not been the case in Palo Alto.”

Will enhance productivity – 5

“There are too many to mention. The creativity that will be unleashed given a city-wide fiber-optic network will boggle the mind! The decision to go forward with this will be looked upon as incredibly wise and visionary by future generations of Palo Altans.”

Benefits of a single provider – 7

“the convenience of 1-stop customer service to resolve any issues -- no more bouncing between depts, companies, etc. True accountability.”

3. Dissatisfaction with current service

Dissatisfied with AT&T – 20

“at the moment, I am waiting for the DISH installer because of my frustration with AT&T Broadband. If done right, the fiber/optic network will be a great step for Palo Alto. But please run it as a business which pays for itself by offering competitive services; don't run it as some great public service for the good of Palo Alto.”

“Since AT&T Broadband took over Cable Co-Op, our cable TV prices have gone up while our selection of good channels and transmission quality has gone down. Also, AT&T Broadband's customer service is abysmal. It would be great for us to have an alternative provider and them to have some competition.”

Dissatisfied with Pac Bell – 3

“As a general matter, anything that breaks the AT&T Broadband/PacBell monopoly over cable and DSL/phone service is a very good thing and a 'unique benefit.' PacBell should suffer from its pathetic customer service and (lack of) responsiveness.”

Dissatisfied with customer service of existing providers – 3

“Our services with AOL and with AT&T Broadband are terrible and the customer service is equally bad. Palo Alto Utilities is reasonably priced, customer service is very accomodating and Palo Alto should have our own services. After all, we are at the cutting edge of technology.”

Dissatisfied with current Internet provider – 5

“We do not currently have access to any high speed internet connection. ATT and Pcabell do not care about the Palo Alto Hills neighborhood.”

Text Question Two

Use this space if you have an issue or concern about extending fiber optic service to the home that should be considered by the Utility Department:

Many of the respondents used this question to affirm the importance of one or another aspect of FTTH, for example, “Be sure it is priced competitively.” These responses imply a tacit approval of FTTH. However, only those who positively endorsed FTTH were included in the **I strongly endorse the FTTH project** category.

All responses

Consumer pricing – 49 responses

“I would be concerned that the customer service would not be as good as my current providers (PacBell (phone), SBC/PacBell (DSL) and AT&T Broadband (cable). However, if all things were as good or better (price, quality, service), I would love to have a single provider that was CPAU! But, I am also concerned about what happens when the prices go up - will the City react to be competitive? Or, will the City's prices be lower (ie how the utilities are cheaper than PG&E)?”

Cost of the project – 49

Many respondents were concerned that the price of the project would be too high and/or that taxes would increase as a result.

“my main concern would be the financial burden to the city that might be passed on to customers, making it an expensive service”

“Any 'Fiber to Home' scheme should stand on its own, without subsidy from the general fund or other utility budgets. I just find it hard to believe that the City can succeed, on a small scale, in an arena where a host of private companies with hords of cash to burn have failed miserably. Make me a believer or find a creative way to partner up with private companies. Has the City talked to RCN? I have used RCN for an all-in-one Cable TV/Phone/Cable Modem package at my small office in San Francisco for the last year and although their financial status is shaky (who isn't) they have delivered a very reliable service. I believe RCN has a franchise for a competitive cable TV service in Palo Alto which they have back-burnered. Perhaps the City could work out a deal with RCN that allows them to roll out a service to compete with AT&T and Pac Bell. Maybe it could use the City's Fiber Backbone. As far as I know, RCN has not yet implemented Fiber to Home, but even if it doesn't, the cable modem's speed is more than adequate for 99% of internet users.”

The city has no business doing FTTH – 12

“Currently, there are many competitors in the internet service business. This is very different than the competitive situation for gas and electric. And almost all of those providers are losing money. Why does the City need to take the risk? What is the problem that the City is looking to solve, that cannot be solved by private enterprise?”

When/where will the service be available? – 20

Some were concerned that the service would be rolled out only to certain parts of town, while others wanted to know when it would come to *their* house.

“I worry that you won't be able to do it fast enough. We are still waiting in my part of town for electricity undergrounding and it has been years.”

“It's taking you so long to do it. Get on with it. Itty bitty communities with 1/10th the money we have are already connected.”

“Mt only concernis that you won't do it in a time-frame which will beat the market, i.e. let's get on with it!”

“Make sure you cover EVERY home in PA including PA Hills”

Is CPAU competent to manage the business? – 34

“Not marketing this concept well to the entire city could result in a bond issue not passing or in a proliferation of confusing and less reliable services disrupting the town.”

“avoid blundering into a political foodfight before fully baking a stockpile of nourishing fiber technical demos and business plans”

“If this optical fiber is available, waht is city's plan to manage the operation and service. List pros and cons compare to private company who is manage the service and operation.”

“Hey! you guys can't even process my utility bill via electronic bank or credit card withdrawals. Do you expect me to believe you could handle a direct to the home fiber optic system?”

“1. Not sure of the value-add provided by CPAU passing through other providers - who do you call with a problem? If CPAU, why should I think CPAU can do anything more than just pass the problem on the the provider? 2. Not clear from this proposal how providers make their offerings available over the CPAU fiber. If I have a provider I really like (e.g., FoxSportsWorld through Directv) how would I continue to receive that from CPAU? 3. Past experience with Cable Co-op was that it was overly concerned with being uniquely 'Palo-Altan' (not necessarily a good thing), expensive, and not concerned enough with being a responsive and viable business that provided what its customers wanted. How would CPAU be any different in this venture?”

“Telephone and T.V. Cable leave to pros. CPAU, take care of what you do best!”

Cable Co-op was a disaster – 23

Many citizens are clearly unaware of the fact that Cable Co-op was a private organization. They also do not distinguish between the City of Palo Alto and CPAU.

“I thought the Cable Coop management was so poor that my experience creates doubts about how successful the city will be in managing a fiber optic system. These technologies always fall short of their promises in my experience. You have a lot of surprises in store for you. But, I wish you well.”

“I do not want the city in this area. The city messed up the cable TV for a decade and the fiber is another example of two years and nothing but a toy for the few. I have been on the net for three years while the city studied and played with the idea and test.”

I strongly endorse the FTTH project – 44

Many respondents used the “issues and concerns” question to add additional support to the FTTH idea.

“What are we waiting for? Let's get on with it! I'm not paying for the highest standard of living in the country just to sit around and fill out surveys. I expect to be provided with access to state of the art, cutting edge technology or I might as well sell this dump and move somewhere that will provide it for me. My biggest concern is that the city will botch it like they did with Cable Co-op.”

“I think Palo Alto has always done well by us in the way in which it has managed our utilities. Until very recently, rates were excellent. I'd like to see the city expand its management to Internet and TV access for residents.”

“You have an excellent record of supplying reliable utility service. High speed internet is the new utility service that you should provide!”

“I currently am in the trial. It's totally awesome. Please continue to build upon this system. Both Pac Bell's DSL and AT&T's Cable Modem service are very good (I have both) -- the fiber is MUCH better. Worth a premium price!!”

“No concerns. I've been salivating over the fiber access since it was first proposed about three years ago. Let's move on this!!”

“So many previous 'false starts' - I'm happy to put energy/\$ into this, but in the past, it has been for naught. PLEASE DO FTTH!!”

“Please permit residents outside the current test neighborhood to join the FTTH service. I will gladly pay installation costs.”

“I am in the current FTTH trial and its great, fabulous, couldn't be better. IT MUST NOT END AND MUST BE EXPANDED TO EVERYONE - they have no idea what they're missing.”

“

The City should focus on more important priorities – 18

“There are more important needs in this city that should be addressed first...like the infrastructure. Our streets & sidewalks are a mess. they need to be repaired promptly!”

“One thing I'm sure of, the cost will be much more than planned on plus we have other infrastructures that need attention first”

“1. Cost must be balanced against other pressing social needs, ie. servc. for homeless, traffic calming, growth management 2. My only personal reasons for not subscribing to the whole package of services (assuming a reasonably competitive price) would be that I am a part -time resident and therefore try to minimize fixed costs.”

Concerns/questions about the service levels to be offered – 71

“Upstream bandwidth is very important to me because I would like to use programs that require intensive 2-way data transfer. The DSL upstream bandwidth is not good enough to justify the cost. However, good upstream bandwidth, coupled with the ability to run a server at reasonable cost would be a BIG incentive. I would ideally like a fixed IP address.”

“The city boundaries are huge -- will the folks in the Hills, as well as in more compact neighborhoods, get the same service at the same price?”

“Would the City put the necessary pressure on the Condo complex to get them to correct their substandard cabling so that I could receive these services; or do I remain at the mercy of people who don't seem to care about the quality of their services?”

“Make sure that you partner with a very competent firm to provide end-user technical support. Palo Alto residents are often technically savvy and will not put-up with technical incompetence for very long.”

“I would only be concerned about the relationship between the CPAU and the other utilities (TV, phone, computer network). I would be interested in how companies qualify to be content or service providers, and how we as customers relate to the providers. It isn't clear from your descriptions whether the city itself will provide more than simply the fiber optic cable.”

“A number of questions come up: who provides tech support? Would there be dial-up numbers I could use if I travel (as are provided by ISPs like Earthlink and AOL)? Are

there complications that a government run entity might have trouble working through... like blocking porn sites or spam?"

The FTTH project will inconvenience me – 16

Some respondents were concerned about having the streets or their yards dug up.

“Don't dig up the streets right after repaving them (as El Camino Real was done)!!!!!!!!!!”

“If it is going to cause more street disruption I am not real crazy about that. We have been dealing with sewer replacement and the like and I would like a break from digging up my street.”

Miscellaneous – 14

“What are the safety issues and cancer causing properties of the Fiber Optics? Are there fiber optic stations? Where aer they? Do residents want them? Are they safe?”