



Office of Community Services
Center of Southwest Studies, Room 260
1000 Rim Drive
Durango, CO 81301-3999
970-247-7333 tel
970-247-7032 fax

May 22, 2006

Governor Bill Owens
136 State Capitol
Denver, CO 80203-1792

State Sen. Jim Isgar
11190 C. R. 141
Hesperus, CO 81326

State Rep. Mark Larson
1703 Rolling Road
Cortez, CO 81321

Dear Governor Owens, Senator Isgar and Representative Larson:

In April of 2000, when the Governor's office launched a statewide initiative to bring fiber backbone to every county in the state, the promise was made to bridge the digital divide between rural and urban areas via a \$37-million contract with Qwest. Today the claim of project completion has one serious flaw: thanks to a 16-mile gap, the town of Silverton still lacks the promised fiber optic line, and is served instead by an existing microwave radio link with added bandwidth capability. This approach, originally proposed as a temporary measure till right-of way issues were resolved, is now supposed to serve as a permanent solution.

This situation is unacceptable. It leaves San Juan County at a significant disadvantage, negatively affecting economic development and greatly limiting access to educational, government and business data services. Relying on a microwave radio relay for all telecommunications – phone, cell, and internet – puts Silverton in the unsafe and untenable position of losing all communications to the outside world, as happened for a day last winter when an avalanche disabled one of the relay stations.

The San Juan County Board of Commissioners has requested assistance in determining why Qwest was not required to complete the fiber optic line to Silverton, and in assuring that the fiber optic line is completed to the San Juan County seat as promised. We fully support their request, and strongly urge you to rectify expediently the unacceptable failure to link the one remaining county seat currently excluded from this worthwhile, greatly needed program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ken Francis".

Ken Francis, Director

c: Pat Swonger, Town of Silverton
Peter McKay, San Juan County Board of Commissioners