Bursty broadband will offer a faster experience, FierceTelecom, August 27, 200

A. Michael Noll

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These comments are solely my own, and have nothing to do with my employer, in any way shape or manner whatsoever.

Professor Noll must be trying to generate some excitement with his guest editorial. Either that or his "less government is better" ideology is completely clouding his judgment. To claim that bursty broadband does not offer more or better performance is simply not factual.

Imagine the old days of dial-up modems at 56kbps. No one could have used Skype with video: it was not even a possibility. If we follow Prof. Noll's argument, DSL and Cable modems simply offered faster performance, not more or better. In fact DSL and Cable modems at higher bursty speeds, enabled completely new and better communications experience, at lower cost to the consumer.

Let's look at another example. Music downloads took off when college students had access to 10/100Mbps network speeds. With a dialup modem, downloading a full CD album would have taken an entire day, or more, if there were bit errors generating re-transmission requiring even longer times. That is not an application that is even conceivable without high bit rate connectivity. And of course, the same holds true for video downloads.

With faster bursty broadband connectivity, entirely new applications are possible. Telecommuting (and I do that) was truly enabled by broadband to the home, and the small local offices.

While the Prof. is concerned with the use of broadband to watch boring TV (BTW, there are many entertaining and intelligent shows as well), he should realize that YouTube wouldn't exist without broadband. It has enabled entirely new modes of education and great personal expression. You can see educational videos on optics, lasers, horticulture politics, fashion and even how to take a shower. Again, this is not even possible without broadband connectivity speeds.

I have no doubt others can name many more applications today that require high speed. Tomorrow, there will be even more, and one can rest assured that as the speeds increase so will the proliferation of useful (and stupid) applications.

Prof. Noll's argument against government funding falls flat on its face and makes no sense whatsoever. There are many clear and obvious uses for high speed connectivity. And in many parts of the country, if the government doesn't step in, the economics don't make sense and no one else will either. So if you believe in the interstate highway system, the rural electrification program,

government funded flood control, rural telephone service, rural telemedicine or other federally supported programs that equalize the playing field for all, then you can believe there are benefits for the country in the rural broadband funding programs.

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