

Clyde, Ohio votes for commercial BPL network

Sojitz, Shpigler to install commercial municipal network

BPL is 10-year stop-gap for citywide FTTP

The city council voted 5-0 in favor of a plan to install a commercial BPL network to pass all of the 2,800+ power meters in the city about 38 miles south and east of Toledo.

The Shpigler Group of Nyack, NY, was hired to write the RFP for the project.

Sojitz Corp's US brand in New York City -- the American branch of the Japanese industrial giant -- won the contract to deploy it.

The winning bid is to use Corinex's AV 200 access BPL gear (*BPL Today*, 9/12).

Mark that a small win on the DS2 side of the BPL chip wars -- as technology camps hustle for market traction and deployments in the field to bolster their play for dominance in the ongoing BPL standard efforts.

Sojitz is the US distributor for Vancouver-based Corinex -- a deal Corinex signed almost two years ago, Sojitz Sales Manager Bob Waltenspiel told us Wednesday.

His firm is "master distributor" in the US and a global partner with Corinex.

Sojitz recently opened PowerlineShop.com to sell Corinex gear to end users (*BPL Today*, 5/9).

The Sojitz bid for Clyde included hiring Shpigler to deploy the network.

"We don't have any engineering capabilities," reported Waltenspiel.

The local municipal utility -- Clyde Light & Power -- will do the line-work with Shpigler's help testing and coordinating the installation.

Daniel Weaver expects about 25% of local consumers to sign up for the BPL.

He's Clyde's city manager.

Weaver and two town council members heard about BPL at an APPA meeting and visited Manassas to learn more.

Clyde has 6,000 residents and few hopes that incumbent broadband providers would deploy service, Weaver explained.

The town has Whirlpool's largest factory -- producing about 19,000 clothes washers/day.

The plant draws some 15,000-20,000 commuting workers into the city (*BPL Today*, 11/15/04).

Whirlpool recently bought Maytag and started closing its plants in Iowa and Arkansas.

Thus more jobs will be coming to Clyde, noted Weaver.

New Zealand white goods firm Fisher & Paykel opened a washing machine plant in Clyde citing skilled workers and a central location for supplying North America, reported the *New Zealand Herald's* website (www.nzherald.co.nz/organisation/story.cfm?o_id=64&ObjectID=10347875).

The plant makes competing washing machines and even a motor used by the Whirlpool plant, noted Weaver.

He's not ready to attribute the economic boom in his city to the broadband plans but "it didn't hurt."

Some of the larger commercial customers will likely opt for the fiber.

Clyde plans to use the developer model -- or franchise agreement -- for the BPL network.

That means the city will issue an RFP for a firm to run the commercial broadband venture once the network is deployed.

The city hired a law firm to handle that RFP, said Weaver, and should issue it by late summer.

Adding the service provider should be the minor part of the project and customers should start getting service before the end of the year, he predicted.

Some cities and utilities see utility or municipal applications as the key feature of a BPL network and broadband as an

afterthought while others are focused on the broadband as an economic boost and necessary service for residents and businesses.

Clyde's in the latter category.

Weaver believed "little old Clyde, Ohio" with 6,000 residents would be left on the broadband wayside to fend for itself.

So fend it did, noted Weaver.

Clyde's leaders have a "progressive" attitude, reported Waltenspiel and David Shpigler, founder and CEO of Shpigler Group.

The latter performed much of the early consultancy work in the nascent BPL industry and branched into BPL implementation and service provision in the last year or so.

Clyde hired Shpigler Group to do a BPL pilot in 2004 that included a variety of demonstrations including three public kiosks -- in a bank, a café and a library Shpigler reminded us Thursday.

"Anyone in the city could come in and try out the BPL" and thus the general public experienced BPL first-hand unlike many pilots that put the service in a few customers' homes.

"The public reaction was very strong. The system worked well," said Shpigler.

After that trial ended the city was in the midst of building out its fiber optic network in part to support BPL plans plus SCADA use.

The fiber is to be done within a couple months, Shpigler added.

Clyde plans to spend about \$750,000 for the fiber and BPL combined, noted Weaver.

That's the short-term price tag.

Long-term -- in a decade or so -- Weaver plans to deploy FTTP throughout the muni's entire footprint.

Then he believes a video content provider will move in and use the network to create some video competition and drive prices down.

Clyde is just south of the Ohio turnpike near Sandusky on the banks of Lake Erie -- about half-way between Cleveland and Toledo.