

MorphOS 2.2

I hope everyone had a decent holiday this year. Mine was pretty good. I think one of the better gifts this year came from the MorphOS team. A few days before Christmas, MorphOS 2.2 was released to the public as a free update for registered users. Aside from a piece of disk encryption software called Kryptos, 2.2 is basically an update of minor tweaks and bug fixes. Even so, I'm rather pleased with it — a problem I had with loading files in certain software under 2.1 has been cleared up, and with previous updates my Pegasos 2 system is the most stable and capable it's ever been. It's only too bad it had to take years to make it to this point.

This update is all well and good for those who paid for MorphOS 2 and above, but what about those MorphOS users who couldn't or wouldn't pay for the pricey update? The MorphOS team technically didn't have to do anything for them, especially if the goal was to sell more registrations for version 2, but they did anyway. Around the first of 2009, an "update pack" was released for the free MorphOS 1.4. This package updates several system libraries and other files, mainly to increase general compatibility with MorphOS software written for 2.0 and above system files. While I'm only a former 1.4 user, I can appreciate them taking the effort to compile these updates to help out those using the older OS version.

As I said previously, my Pegasos 2

under MorphOS 2.2 is the best it's ever been, which should be expected considering it's the latest version of the OS. There are a few things that would be nice to add though. Nowadays most modern operating systems are more stable and crash very seldom (yes, even Windows). Software that crashes is usually trapped and can be shut down without bringing the rest of the system down with it. MorphOS has improved in this regard as well, though not to the same level. It may be too much to ask to reach a "crash-proof" level, as MorphOS deals with years, if not decades old Amiga software as a matter of course, while most other OSes have all but totally reinvented themselves over the last several years, and are rarely asked to contend with software five, much less ten or more years old.

While it is not part of an operating system per se, MorphOS (not to mention near any Amiga or related system) could really use a modern web browser, as Internet "standards" have passed Amiga browsers by over time. It may come sooner rather than later, however. At one point a port of Mozilla Firefox was assumed to be the likely candidate, but browsers based on the open-source "Web Kit" software (used for a lot of things, including "Safari" on the Mac) seem closer to reality at this point, such as Sputnik for MorphOS and OWB for Amiga OS4. Hopefully one of these will reach a reasonably complete and modern point before long, and propagate among the related OS forms.

Finally, in what is probably a

contradiction of my first wish, I'd love some better compatibility ironing out the quirks of some old Amiga software. Actually, what would be much better is for the old Amiga software to be replaced with native PPC/MorphOS improved ports, or at least something of equal functionality. I suppose having an operating system that works as well as mine is now makes me want all the software I like to use work equally well, and for there to be as much of it as possible (not to mention being able to use it all on an operating system I actually like).

Happy new year, everyone!

...by Eric Schwartz
from the AmiTech-Dayton Gazette,
January 2009

Our Digital Future

The 111th Congress is now in session, and the first order of business is a massive economic stimulus package. President-elect Barack Obama has been vocal about his intention to devote part of the money to broadband infrastructure as one way to boost the economy. According to a 2007 study by the Brookings Institution, a 20 percent increase in broadband adoption — putting the U.S. on par with a country like Denmark — would create 3 million new jobs.

As the Obama transition team shifted into high-gear last month, S. Derek Turner, research director of

Free Press, put forward a proposal to make world-class, high-speed broadband available to all areas of the country, bring new competition to the broadband market — which will help keep prices down — and boost America's slumping standing as a global leader in technology.

Derek Turner — There is a sort of intersection and a unison between what is good telecom policy and what is good stimulus policy, and I think we found that. And the way we achieve this is basically, since things are moving so fast, we tried to use off the shelf ideas, policy options that have already been debated or programs that are already in place and essentially tweak those a little bit, boost the funding, and get them out the door as fast as possible. And so we think this is something that is realistic and can be done as soon as possible and start getting new jobs created this year — and for the years to come.

Turner wants a high-capacity broadband infrastructure across America, including rural and low-income areas. The \$44 billion proposal is a mixture of federal grants, bonds, tax incentives and credits. Funding would only be awarded for new projects and faster speeds that wouldn't happen otherwise. Accountability, Turner says, is the cornerstone of the package.

Derek Turner — We can't simply be writing blank checks to companies and get nothing in return. Money's not going to be

used to give companies funds to do things they were already going to do. We only propose supporting new investment beyond what would have already have taken place. And there are checks and balances in our proposal to make that happen. That's something we absolutely have to be aware of. Unless the accountability and oversight is there, there's no point to doing it at all. We shouldn't use the money for broadband if there's no accountability or oversight — we should use it for something else. Our

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Since job creation will only come with people actually using broadband services, Turner also includes proposals to stimulate demand, like subsidies for installation, discounts on monthly subscriptions, tax deductions for home computers for children, and a program to purchase laptops and build Wi-Fi networks at schools and

libraries. Rural development, health care and public service programs are also covered, along with improved broadband data collection and public access to that data.

Turner's is not the only plan that's been given to the Obama transition team. Some have merit and others are much more industry-friendly.

Derek Turner — Some of the other plans that are out there are well-detailed and good. Fiber-to-the-Home Council — their plan is one for bonds for building fiber-to-the-home. We think that's a good plan. There are some plans that I would be a little cautious about. There's one by an industry-funded think tank that on the surface seems to be reasonable — it's got some good speed goals and it's a tax credit program. But when you drill down, you actually see that this plan would not actually lead to any new broadband investment and could essentially just be a big gift to the incumbent phone and cable companies. So we need to only work with plans and only adopt plans that are open, transparent, and that have real measurable end goals and there's real accountability and oversight to make sure that those end goals are reached.

To read Derek Turner's proposal, go to freepress.net/research.

...Producer: Stevie Converse & Candace Clement
Media Minutes for January 9, 2009
<<http://www.freepress.net/files/MM1-9-09-Transcript.doc>>

February Calendar

February 4 — Amiga By-The-Loop Chapter
7:00 pm — **South** Grand Prairie Public Library
760 Bardin Road, Grand Prairie

February 4 — MCCC Board of Director's Meeting
Approx. 9:15 pm — Location TBD

February 27 — Newsletter Deadline — 7:00 am