



# County of Monterey

**Item No.**

## Board Report

Board of Supervisors  
Chambers

168 W. Alisal St., 1st Floor  
Salinas, CA 93901

**Legistar File Number: A 22-624**

**December 06, 2022**

**Introduced:** 11/30/2022

**Current Status:** Agenda Ready

**Version:** 1

**Matter Type:** BoS Agreement

- a. Receive a broadband progress report from the Chief Information Officer; and
- b. Provide further direction as appropriate.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors:

- a. Receive a broadband progress report from the Chief Information Officer; and
- b. Provide further direction as appropriate.

**SUMMARY/DISCUSSION:**

The term “digital divide” is often used in reference to regions of the County that are rural and remote and lacking services. This term is also used in discussing urban residents who cannot afford internet service plans or devices, do not have reliable service, lack digital literacy, and/or are not apprised of programs that will help offset the rising costs of broadband.

The County’s objective to ensure digital equity and close the digital divide is implemented through strategic initiatives that address negative impacts on the health, welfare, and social outcomes of residents lacking reliable broadband services at a reasonable cost.

This progress report summarizes the following activities that support digital equity and make a positive impact on the digital divide:

- 1) The County of Monterey, as part of the Golden State Finance Authority (GSFA), entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with GSFA to develop a strategic plan for broadband expansion in 2021. The Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC) will manage the RFP process and vendor engagement. County engagement once vendor is chosen will begin in January 2023 with a project completion at the end of 2023.
- 2) The Information Technology Department (ITD) provided input on finalizing the Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement, creating the South Salinas Valley Broadband Authority JPA. This agreement enabled the cities of Gonzales, Soledad, Greenfield, and King City to partner with the County of Monterey to collaborate in extending broadband services to rural regions of the county.
- 3) The ITD Radio Communications team facilitated the middle-mile connectivity necessary to extend network services from Cruzio Internet’s network. The middle-mile connectivity enabled Cruzio Internet to complete the last-mile implementation in the San Jerardo Farmworker Housing Cooperative.

4) With approval and allocation of \$1,935,000 in County funds, the ITD department released an RFP for broadband last-mile implementation with two providers chosen through a competitive process: Cruzio Internet and Spectrum Pacific West, LLC. Cruzio Internet has completed Hall District site and both vendor's projects are in the planning phase.

5) ITD submitted a Local Area Technical Assistance (LATA) grant proposal through Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), resulting in approval of a grant from the California Public Utilities Commission in the amount of \$500,000. The LATA funding enables the County to receive professional services to support the following broadband project phases necessary to be construction ready in the South Salinas Valley region of the County: 1) Conceptual network design and cost estimation, 2) Refined high-level design and foundational planning, and 3) Low-level design and engineering that RCRC will facilitate. The County membership in Golden State Connect Authority (GSCA), GSFA, and Salinas Valley Broadband Authority was instrumental in the planning efforts.

As the network design for each LATA awardee moves through the process from Conceptual to High-Level, and then to Low-Level designs, GSCA will be evaluating all aspects of the work product, along with some of following criteria: 1) financial analysis, 2) number of addresses served in proposed project areas, 3) composition of addresses served (unserved, under-served, served), 4) socio-economic composition of communities, and 5) connection to State Middle Mile. This evaluation will lead to a ranking of potential project areas for GSCA to pursue.

When a project area is identified by GSCA for deployment of open-access municipal broadband network, GSCA staff will meet with County to assess interest and willingness to partner in the project. Partnership with GSCA in this regard requires no financial commitment on the part of the County but does mean that GSCA will work with the County to design and deploy the network within the communities.

6) ITD enrolled the County in holding a *GetConnected California!* event on October 22, 2022, to promote the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). ACP enables qualifying County residents to enroll in low-cost internet services. Currently, 19% of residents that qualify for reduced internet services are enrolled, and *GetConnected California!* events are intended to increase participation. ITD lead the planning of the event held at Monterey County Free Library (MCFL) in Seaside and the Cesar Chavez Library in Salinas. However, County of Monterey Health Department and MCFL were also instrumental in the planning, coordination, provision of resources and direct participation in the day of the event. This exemplified the true nature and attitude of collaboration within the County of Monterey. Plans for an event in South County Monterey for Spring of 2023 is in progress.

7) The California Department of Transportation (CDT) will oversee the middle mile construction spanning approximately 10,000 miles Monterey County portion of the middle mile construction plan is 180 miles with construction completion to be no later than the end of December 2026. This will support future last mile construction by providers. The California Department of Corporation for Education Network Initiatives in California (CENIC) will be the third party administrator to manage the development, acquisition, construction, maintenance, and operations of the open access middle-mile network.

8) Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has released broadband maps intended for iterative

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broadband data collection through community input. To accomplish this task, County residents can submit or challenge mobile and fixed broadband speeds through a mobile application or FCC’s website. Bulk challenges to stated speeds will require professional services engagement.

9) Ongoing efforts include advocacy for providers submitting funding requests to the state and federal agencies to construct broadband services that exceed the minimum standard FCC benchmark of 25/3 Mbps. The diversity of internet service providers will infuse competition, lower costs, incentivize reliable service provision, and provide options for our residents. Another vital initiative is to seek public-private partnerships that is sustainable long-term encouraging additional internet service providers. Currently, the ARPA funded project for broadband expansion through the provision of seed monies to construct last mile connectivity is a great example. Lastly, communications and collaboration across provider, community service, and government agencies is vital to determining advocacy needed in support of projects and potential partnerships that benefit the county residents. ITD staff is actively participating in committees represented by multiple counties, community partners, and private agencies to share information, provide input, and leverage the collective resources necessary to develop broadband strategies.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

ITD will continue to collaborate and coordinate with other County departments to promote programs that improve digital equity.

FINANCING:

The activities presented to the Board requiring funding have received prior Board approval.


BOARD OF SUPERVISORS STRATEGIC INITIATIVES:

Approval of the recommended actions address the digital divide and lack of internet access that disproportionately effects unserved and underserved Monterey County residents the rural region of the County. The collaboration and partnerships on expanding broadband access will close the digital divide throughout Monterey County.

- X Economic Development
- \_\_ Administration
- X Health & Human Services
- X Infrastructure
- \_\_ Public Safety

Prepared by: Sarah House, Information Technology Manager, 759-6992

Approved by:

DocuSigned by:  
  
 Date: 12/2/2022 | 2:43 PM PST  
 Eric A. Chatham, Chief Information Officer, 759-6920

Attachments:

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Board Presentation