



County of Monterey

Board of Supervisors
Chambers
168 W. Alisal St., 1st Floor
Salinas, CA 93901

Board Report

File #: A 22-112, **Version:** 1

Receive a progress report from the Information Technology Department in response to Board Referral #2021.08 to facilitate regional governance, strategy, collaboration and partnerships on expanding broadband access and closing the digital divide throughout Monterey County, and provide further direction.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors:

- a. Receive a progress report from the Information Technology Department in response to Board Referral #2021.08 to facilitate regional governance, strategy, collaboration and partnerships on expanding broadband access and closing the digital divide throughout Monterey County;
- b. Provide further direction, as appropriate.

SUMMARY:

On July 20, 2021, in Board Referral #2021.08, the Board of Supervisors directed the Information Technology Department (ITD) to report to the Board quarterly on the community broadband project progress. This report as well as ITD's presentation to the Board, will summarize ITD's progress on broadband which includes:

- 1) Broadband RFP update
- 2) Regional Broadband Task Force update
- 3) San Jerardo project update
- 4) Public Wi-Fi stats and sites
- 5) Board Referral #2022.09 South Salinas Valley JPA information

ANALYSIS:

Background:

The Monterey County Information Technology Department (ITD) received Board Referral #2020.25 in 2020, to support collaborative efforts to address the digital divide in partnership with local school districts, cities, the County of Monterey, and community partners, and to advocate for solutions at the state and federal level. In 2021, ITD received Board Referral #2021.08 directed at exploring the potential of creating a Monterey County Broadband Joint Powers Authority (JPA) to facilitate regional governance, strategy, collaboration, and partnerships on expanding broadband access and closing the digital divide throughout Monterey County.

On July 20, 2021, the Board directed ITD to close the Board Referral # 2020.25, and mark it completed. ITD has been reporting to the Board of Supervisors quarterly on the community broadband project progress through its presentation on Board Referral #2021.08 on Broadband JPA.

Project Description:

- 1) Broadband request for proposal (RFP)

In June 2021, the Board of Supervisors approved \$1.935 million in ARPA funds for FY 21-22 for broadband development. A request for proposal (RFP) was released on September 23, 2021. The purpose of the RFP is to seek innovative or traditional broadband solutions from one or more contractors proposing one or multiple

solutions to unserved and underserved areas of the county. Five vendor proposals with 16 projects were received.

The following projects were tentatively selected :

- Spectrum Pacific West, LLC - (San Ardo)
- Spectrum Pacific West, LLC - (San Lucas)
- Cruzio Internet - (North County and Salinas areas).

Agreement negotiations are in progress and expected to be completed by end of March 2022.

2) Regional Broadband Task Force update

ITD held the second Broadband Task Force meeting on February 22, 2022. The following entities serve on the task force: County of Monterey ITD, Monterey County Office of Education (MCOE), Monterey Bay Economic Partnership, City of Gonzales and City of Salinas. The following topics were discussed:

- Broadband RFP update
- South Salinas Valley Broadband Joint Powers Authority (JPA) concept
- Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC) Broadband strategic plan grant update
- MCOE and schools' broadband needs
 - a. Connect underserved schools such as San Antonio school
 - b. RFP using E-Rate funding to be completed by MCOE by the end of April 2022.

The next task force meeting will be held in May 2022.

3) San Jerardo project update

ITD has been working with Cruzio Internet to provide broadband to San Jerardo community. Site colocation agreements between Cruzio and Monterey County (Public Works) were approved on the March 8, 2022 board meeting. This project, which is funded by a California Public Utilities Commission grant, is estimated to be completed by April 2022.

Upon project completion, 66 homes will be provided with high-speed internet connection with no cost for 5 years, including the childcare center and the community hall.

4) Public Wi-Fi implementation

ITD completed public Wi-Fi implementation in County buildings in September 2021. As a result, 22 County buildings are equipped with public Wi-Fi that benefits nearby County residents within 328 feet beyond each building perimeter. Within a 30-day period, there were 1666 unique devices connected to the new Wi-Fi system, utilizing 3.2 TB of data. Five additional County sites are identified to deploy public Wi-Fi, which is estimated to be completed by June 30, 2022.

5) Board Referral #2022.09

On February 8, 2022, ITD was assigned Board Referral #2022.09 to explore the potential of creating a Salinas Valley Five Cities Joint Powers Authority (JPA) in an additional measure to further develop broadband in the County. A JPA could benefit the community by having cities and the County work together with a collective vision and cost sharing. Discussion regarding this Board referral will be covered in a separate Board report and presentation.

Estimated Project Cost:

In June 2021, the Board of Supervisors approved \$1.935 million in ARPA funds for FY 21-22 for broadband development. At this point, no County funds will be necessary for this project; ITD will return to the Board with additional cost if there is any.

Staffing Level Estimate:

No additional staff is needed at this time.

Departmental Challenges:

The community broadband challenge is about coming up with a sustainable and executable public and private partnership model that will benefit Monterey County residents for the long term, while producing quick and measurable outcomes. As such, ITD will continue working on the approved community broadband projects and deliver community broadband services to County constituents.

Proposed Response Date:

ITD will continue to provide the Board with a quarterly update.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS STRATEGIC INITIATIVES:

The pandemic has underscored the critical utility of broadband infrastructure. From the homework gap and workforce adaptation to essential healthcare services and e-commerce, broadband is now the keystone to our nation's response to the global pandemic and imperative to building resilient and future-ready communities. The lack of reliable broadband is a major economic barrier and a leading driver of socioeconomic inequality. The County's goal is to ensure that every resident in Monterey County, regardless of their circumstances, could access broadband. The ability to do so will pay dividends far beyond the current crisis we find ourselves in. With unprecedented federal and state funding that will soon be allocated to address the digital divide and expand broadband access throughout California, including federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, a record state budget allocation this year, there is an immediate need for local governments to create a governance structure to better facilitate a regional strategy. 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

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Approved by:

_____ Date: _____
Eric A. Chatham, Chief Information Officer, 759-6920

- Attachments:
- Board Presentation
 - Board Referral No. # 2021.08