



County of Monterey

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

Board Report

File #: A 21-497, **Version:** 1

Adopt a Resolution to approve and authorize the Chairperson to execute the Golden State Connect Authority Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors:

Adopt a Resolution to approve and authorize the Chairperson to execute the Golden State Connect Authority Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement.

SUMMARY:

Monterey County has a serious digital divide problem and a recent photo of two little girls outside a fast-food restaurant in East Salinas has brought national attention to this crisis. It is critical that Monterey County expresses support for Rural County Representative of California (RCRC)'s broadband initiative by approving and authorizing the execution of the Golden State Connect Authority Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement. The objective is to increase access to reliable, affordable high-speed broadband for all rural Californians. There is no financial impact associated with joining the JPA, and no obligation for individual member counties to provide funds to the Authority, absent a separate agreement to participate in one (or more) of the specific programs.

DISCUSSION:

On August 18, 2021, the Board of Directors of Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC) voted unanimously to approve the formation of a Joint Powers Authority (JPA), Golden State Connect Authority, for the purpose of expanding broadband access and quality in rural counties. Following approval by the RCRC Board, the next step in establishment of this entity is to provide the Golden State Connect Authority JPA to each RCRC Member County for review and approval by the Member County Boards of Supervisors.

Activities within Golden State Connect Authority will focus exclusively on broadband. All RCRC member counties are welcome and encouraged to join. There is no financial impact associated with joining the JPA, and no obligation for individual member counties to provide funds to the Authority, absent a separate agreement to participate in one (or more) of the specific programs. As with RCRC, the proposed new entity will be governed by delegate Supervisors from each member county, and day-to-day operations will be administered by RCRC staff.

The primary goals for the project structure are:

- a) to ensure that elected County Supervisors retain control of the program, with day-to-day administration provided by RCRC staff, and
- b) to allow for partnership agreements between like-governmental entities for the operation and advancement of the program of work, and
- c) to attract public and private investment in the program, as necessary and appropriate.

Initial areas of focus for broadband work on behalf of Member Counties will include:

- a) Foundational Readiness: Ensure all member counties have broadband strategic plans.
- b) Capacity Building: Equip rural counties with information and resources about innovative models and approaches to broadband deployment.
- c) Demonstration Projects: Implement open-access municipal broadband projects.

The Covid-19 pandemic has underscored the critical utility of broadband infrastructure. From the school age children's lack of access to the internet to complete their homework and workforce adaptation to essential healthcare services and e-commerce, broadband is now the keystone to our nation's response to the global pandemic. Broadband services are 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 approval of adopting the Golden State Connect Authority Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement is advantageous to the County. The development of a broadband strategic plan through JPA will provide important benefits for rural economies; such as joint plans and development of direct broadband services into unserved and under-served communities, provide up to date information needed for local elected officials to develop policies that encourage investing in broadband services; and lastly, it will open the door for rural communities to take advantage of federal funding opportunities that require (or strongly encourage) broadband strategic plans to be in place.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

County Counsel reviewed and approved the letter of support.

FINANCING:

There is no financial impact associated with joining the JPA, and no obligation to provide funds to the Authority, absent a separate agreement to participate in one (or more) of the specific programs.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS STRATEGIC INITIATIVES:

Adoption of this resolution support key objectives of Economic Development, Health and Human Services and Infrastructure. Providing important broadband services to unserved and under-served communities.

X Economic Development
__ Administration
X Health & Human Services
X Infrastructure
__ Public Safety

Prepared by: Alex Zheng, Division ITD Manager, 759-6991

Approved by:

Date: _____

Eric A. Chatham, Director of Information Technology, 759-6920

Attachments:

Golden State Connect Authority Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement

RCRC Rural Broadband Initiative