



Board Report

File #: A 21-544, **Version:** 1

Receive the progress report from ITD outlined below, 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.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors:

- a. Receive the progress report outlined below in response to Board Referral #2021.08.
- b. Provide further direction, as appropriate.

SUMMARY:

Monterey County IT department (ITD) received Board Referral #2020.25 on Sept. 6, 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. On May 18, 2021, ITD received Board referral #2021.08 to explore the potential of creating a Monterey County Broadband Joint Powers Authority to facilitate regional governance, strategy, collaboration, and partnerships on expanding broadband access and closing the digital divide throughout Monterey County.

On July 20, 2021, Board directed ITD to close the Board Referral # 2020.25, and mark it completed. ITD will report to Board quarterly on the community broadband project progress through its presentation on Board referral #2021.08. This report summarizes ITD's progress on broadband since then which includes:

- 1) Regional broadband task force kick-off
- 2) Broadband RFP release
- 3) Submission of a Board Resolution to execute Golden State Connect Authority JPA agreement
- 4) Public Wi-Fi implementation.

ANALYSIS:

Background:

Monterey County IT department (ITD) received Board Referral #2020.25 on Sept. 6, 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. On May 18, 2021, ITD received Board referral #2021.08 to explore the potential of creating a Monterey County Broadband Joint Powers Authority to facilitate regional governance, strategy, collaboration, and partnerships on expanding broadband access and closing the digital divide throughout Monterey County.

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Project Description:

1) Regional broadband task force kick-off

In response to Board referral #2021.08, ITD discussed with regional partners on community broadband governance, and presented its recommendations on July 20, 2021, with subsequent Board approval. ITD kicked off its first regional broadband Task Force meeting on September 10, 2021. The Task Force will develop a shared vision on regional broadband effort, appropriate governance structure and develop a strategic plan.

2) Broadband RFP release

In June 2021 Board approved \$1.935 million in ARPA funds for FY 21-22 for broadband development. A Request for Proposal 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. From these RFP responses, County will select the best solutions and Contractors to finalize project details for project creation and execution. As part of the RFP process, a Pre-bid meeting was held on October 8, 2021, with Q&A released in addenda. Contractors' responses are expected by November 12, 2021. Announcement of Contractor selections will be around December 2021.

3) Golden State Connect Authority JPA agreement

On September 12, 2021, ITD submitted a Board Resolution to adopt the Golden State Connect Authority JPA agreement, an initiative led by Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC). The signing of the agreement allows Monterey County to join the JPA as a Member County. Initial areas of focus for broadband work of this JPA will include:

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

4) Public Wi-Fi implementation.

ITD completed public Wi-Fi implementation in September 2021. As a result, 22 County buildings are equipped with public Wi-Fi that benefits nearby County residents within 328 feet beyond 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.

Estimated Project Cost:

In June 2021 Board approved \$1.935 million in ARPA funds for FY 21-22 for broadband development.

ITD will return to Board with additional cost if there is any.

Staffing Level Estimate:

No additional staff is needed.

Departmental Challenges:

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 run, 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 while working on a functional regional community broadband governance structure.

Proposed Response Date:

ITD will provide Board with 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. 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, including the Board of Supervisors, cities, school districts, special districts, universities and other community partners and institutions, to create a governance structure to better facilitate regional strategy, collaboration and partnerships on expanding broadband access and closing the digital divide throughout Monterey County.

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

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Attachments:
Board Presentation
Board Referral No. 2021.08