



**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA LETTER**

Agenda Number:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 568-2240

Department Name: County Executive Office
Department No.: 012
For Agenda Of: September 21, 2021
Placement: Departmental
Estimated Time: 1 Hr
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from:
Vote Required: Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Department Director(s)
Contact Info: Jasmine McGinty, Principal Analyst

DocuSigned by:

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SUBJECT: Countywide Broadband Strategic Plan Participation - American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Discussion

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: N/A

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: N/A

Recommended Actions:

- a) Receive and file information and presentation from the Broadband Consortium Pacific Coast (BCPC), Northern Santa Barbara County Econ Alliance, and REACH regarding a countywide strategy for broadband;
- b) Provide comments and/or direction to staff regarding participation in the development of a countywide broadband strategy as appropriate; and
- c) Determine that the above actions are not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), because pursuant to sections 15378(b)(4) and 15378(b)(5) the recommended actions consist of organization, administrative, or fiscal activities of government that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment.

Summary Text:

The Broadband Consortium of the Pacific Coast (BCPC) in coordination with REACH, the Northern Santa Barbara County EconAlliance, local jurisdictions, and other key stakeholders have partnered to bring together stakeholder groups, higher education institutions and telecom providers to develop a long-term strategic plan for broadband deployment throughout Santa Barbara County. BCPC requests the County’s participation in a broadband strategic plan for the County, at an estimated cost of \$200,000, dependent upon participation from other jurisdictions, that is an eligible expense under ARPA guidance to assess the broadband needs of the area, especially those that are disproportionately served. This item provides an opportunity for the Board to hear about

the proposed project. The allocation of ARPA funds for FY 2021-22 will be considered by the Board on October 19, 2021.

Background:

On June 1, 2021, the Board of Supervisors heard from County staff information on the eligibility requirements and possible uses of \$43.3 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds included in the FY 2021-22 Budget. The types of funds presented were both “restricted” to COVID response and recovery activities, to be used in compliance with the U.S. Treasury Department rules; and “discretionary” which has greater flexibility and equal to the amount of revenue losses incurred. Staff presented various potential uses of both restricted and discretionary uses of ARPA funding, where a potential use of restricted funding was in response to the Public Health Emergency and Economic Impacts and asked your Board for direction on potential ways to allocate funds.

During the June 1 meeting, the Board directed staff to return with more information regarding a few focus areas, one of the areas being broadband. In partnership with REACH, BCPC, and the Econ Alliance, County staff have received a proposal to participate in the development of a countywide broadband for a long-term strategic plan for broadband throughout the county and ultimately, the tri-county region. While staff is not asking the Board for any commitment or funding allocation at this time, staff has identified the BCPC Broadband strategy proposal as a qualifying project for ARPA funding, and recommends your Board explore development of a countywide broadband strategy to assist with leveraging state and federal funding. Staff is also exploring possibly joining a consortium of California rural counties interested in broadband service to underserved areas.

Discussion:

County staff has been in conversation with the Broadband Consortium of the Pacific Coast (BCPC), REACH and the Northern Santa Barbara County EconAlliance, as well as local jurisdictions, and other key stakeholders to develop a long-term strategic plan for broadband deployment throughout Santa Barbara County and then the tri-county region. This strategic plan would achieve the following objectives:

- A plan for the design of broadband infrastructure that results in regional middle mile networks to interconnect our local cities, increase capacity, increase disaster preparedness, and encourage industry competition
- Utilize collaborative strategies to ensure digital inclusion and aligns with Broadband for All California Initiative
- Ensure a Smart City vision for the future which requires technological innovation.

Development of a broadband strategic plan would help leverage grant, state, and federal funding. This comprehensive guiding document can be used by jurisdictions within the county to apply for infrastructure funding at the state and federal level and provides the county with a shovel ready approach that aligns areas of needs, with both public and private interests to create a countywide response that will maximize the collaborative potential of the stakeholders involved.

For this particular proposal, BCPC will act as the lead on the project, which includes project management for the deployment and development of the strategic plan. The strategic plan includes an analysis of the current status of broadband needs and gaps in the county, community outreach, Internal Service Provider (ISP) outreach, future planning analysis, and an economic impact analysis. The final deliverable will consist of a County Broadband Strategy to then be utilized by the County and other participants to leverage state and federal resources particular to broadband. Below are examples from the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians in how they have utilized their broadband strategy to leverage funding in order to shed light upon ways in which a broadband strategy can be used by local agencies to access funding opportunities.

Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians Broadband Incentives

The Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians have been working closely in partnership with EconAlliance and the BCPC on various broadband efforts. In July 2021, they completed a broadband strategy and feasibility study funded by the US Department of the Interior, Office of Indian Energy and Economic Development (IEED). This study assessed the current state of broadband on Chumash lands and nearby communities, assessed best practices, contextualized findings and technologies, which led to the development of a stakeholder driven strategy for broadband enhancement on Chumash land.

Since then, they have applied to several funding opportunities with the completion of the strategy which include the California Public Utilities Commission, U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). These opportunities range in scope from creation of a Fiber Ring Broadband Strategy and Business Plan to a middle-mile network design to connect the Chumash Casino to a meeting point in Goleta with extension of last mile fiber to the home.

In addition to the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians, various strategic partners are key in the development of a Countywide Broadband strategy. Their roles are as follows:

- **Broadband Consortium of the PacificCoast (BCPC)**
 - Role: expansion and improvement of broadband deployment, access, and adoption through the development of collaborative, stakeholder-driven regional strategies throughout the central coast.
- **Public Sector Jurisdictions**
 - Role: planning and deployment of broadband and specifically for adopting policies that support broadband installation, an example would be a ‘dig once’ policy in coordination with jurisdictions.
- **Governor’s Office of Business and Economic Development (GoBiz)**
 - Role: regularly convene private-sector companies to understand and predict current and future demand for broadband, help ensure that the proper allocation of resources and manage policies and programs that support broadband goals and initiatives that will support economic development and community wellbeing.
- **Anchor institutions** are large organizations, such as universities, medical centers, government entities, and school districts, that tend to have access to build or connect reliably to broadband and can be considered as part of the ‘middle mile’ and host jumping off points to serve the surrounding community.
 - Role: broadband deployment in the Central Coast region. Representatives would need to participate in a regional stakeholder group.
- **Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians**
 - Role: assist in the connection of infrastructure between Northern Santa Barbara County and Southern San Luis Obispo County opens opportunity for the surrounding jurisdictions.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

This item is not requesting ARPA funding at this time, however, the broadband project is an eligible use. The development of a strategic plan spearheaded through BCPC requires an initial investment from both the County as well as other participating jurisdictions. The initial investment requirement for the study is estimated at an approximate *total* cost of \$300,000, if all jurisdictions within the county participated. BCPC and REACH are approaching all local jurisdictions in within the County for support based on any broadband planning work completed. The BCPC is seeking 75% public sector investment and 25% private sector investment, regardless of total cost. Under the maximum cost of \$300,000, the cost to cover the public sector portion is roughly \$225,000. While the final contribution for Santa Barbara County is dependent upon other jurisdiction’s participation, the

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BCPC and REACH are estimating a County cost of approximately \$200,000, which is roughly 2/3 or 67% of the total estimated cost of \$300,000.

Attachments:

Attachment A – BCPC Santa Barbara County Broadband Strategy Proposal

Authored by: Jasmine McGinty, Principal Analyst