



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: January 24, 2023
Placement: Administrative
Estimated Time: N/A
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from: N/A
Vote Required: Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Department: Mona Miyasato, County Executive Officer
Director(s)
Contact Info: Nancy Anderson, Assistant County Executive Officer

SUBJECT: Local Agency Technical Assistance (LATA) Grant Application for Broadband

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Other Concurrence:

As to form: No

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Recommended Actions:

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors:

- A. Approve and authorize the County Executive Officer, or designee, to sign on behalf of the County a Notarized Affidavit as part of a Local Agency Technical Assistance (LATA) grant application established by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC);
- B. Delegate authority to the County Executive Officer, or designee, to apply for a Local Agency Technical Assistance grant in the amount of \$1,000,000 to implement the Countywide Broadband Strategic Plan, and to sign any documents required in connection with the grant, including a Consent Form;
- C. Approve and authorize the Chair of the Board to sign a Letter of Support for the Application for LATA; and
- D. Determine that the recommended actions are not the acceptance and approval of a project that is subject to environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15378(b)(4), finding that the project is a creation of government funding mechanisms or other government fiscal activities, which do not involve any commitment to any specific project which may result in a potentially significant physical impact on the environment.

Summary:

The CPUC established the Local Agency Technical Assistance (LATA) grant program for eligible pre-construction work facilitating broadband network projects to areas in need. The program has a \$50 million budget for eligible local agencies and tribal entities in California, including a \$5 million set aside for tribes. In coordination with SBCAG on the broadband strategic planning efforts, the County of Santa Barbara seeks authorization to apply for a LATA grant in the amount of \$1,000,000 for the development of a Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (EIR), network high level design, formation of a Joint Powers Authority for Broadband, and broadband coordination efforts. As part of the application requirements, County staff recommends the Board approve and authorize the CEO, or designee, to complete the required Notarized Affidavit (Attachment A).

Background:

On September 21, 2021, staff brought forth a proposal for a countywide broadband strategic plan which included the County’s participation in the development of a long-term strategic plan for broadband throughout the County. During the [October 19, 2021](#) Board meeting on ARPA fund allocations, the Board approved \$200,000 to be used toward a countywide broadband strategic plan. During the [February 1, 2022 meeting](#), the Board approved a subrecipient agreement with SBCAG for the preparation of the broadband strategic plan. Work on the plan begin in January 2022 and was completed in November 2022. On December 15, 2022, the final Broadband Strategic Plan was presented to the SBCAG Board of Directors for approval. The plan will be presented to the Board of Supervisors on January 24, 2023.

On [August 16, 2022](#), your Board approved the County Executive Office apply for a LATA grant in the amount of \$500,000 to implement the Countywide broadband strategic plan for a Programmatic EIR and high-level network design. This submission was written in coordination with SBCAG on their LATA grant submission for the formation of a Joint Powers Authority on Broadband and broadband coordination efforts. On August 17, 2022, staff submitted a LATA grant application to the CPUC requesting a \$500,000 grant award.

Upon review of both the County and SBCAG grant applications, the CPUC notified the County of their recommendation to consolidate both grant applications into one submission by the County, for the total amount of \$1,000,000. This will require CPUC commission review, however, according to the CPUC, the funds are being held aside until the County withdraws its current application and resubmits a modified application, with a revised scope of work, and dollar amount request. As part of the broadband strategic plan implementation, County staff recommends applying for a modified LATA grant in the amount of \$1,000,000 from the CPUC to further broadband implementation efforts. The application will include the intention that SBCAG will provide program oversight and administration for the project.

Discussion:

SBCAG and the County, with the support of each of the region’s local governments, have recently completed the countywide broadband strategic plan. The work was conducted by the Broadband Consortium Pacific Coast and administered by SBCAG staff.

The Santa Barbara County Broadband Strategic Plan will position the region to capitalize on state and federal grants to improve the region’s broadband network. The plan:

1. Identifies the region’s current broadband assets and gaps;
2. Assesses gaps as compared to the region’s disadvantaged communities;

3. Provides planning-level scopes of work for projects to build out the broadband network; and
4. Considers various governance scenarios to continue the work.

The next step is to begin the implementation of the Broadband Strategic Plan. A statewide funding program is available through the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) offering Local Agency Technical Assistance (LATA) grants. These grants are available to government agencies to facilitate broadband deployment. Each applicant is eligible for up to \$500,000. Higher amounts can be requested but will need CPUC Board approval, which will be the case with the proposed revised application (\$1,000,000). All the member jurisdictions are eligible to apply for their own grant if that is needed on a local level.

In late summer 2022, staff worked closely with SBCAG and Broadband Consortium on coordination of LATA grant applications. In August 2022, SBCAG applied for a LATA grant for the development of a Joint Powers Authority for Broadband and the County applied for a LATA grant for a Programmatic EIR and network high level design, as approved by your Board. The two projects were intended to work hand in hand. Based off of input from the CPUC, staff now requests the current applications be withdrawn, and resubmitted as a new grant application consolidating the SBCAG application and the original County application. County staff will be partnering with SBCAG to administer and manage the development of the Programmatic EIR, network design that enables the last mile, coordination of broadband efforts, and the formation of the Joint Powers Authority. The County will be contracting with SBCAG to lead efforts for administration and formation of the JPA. SBCAG will be the project administrator so the County will have more of a participatory role in the JPA.

The purpose of the Countywide Programmatic EIR is to analyze the overall impacts and benefits from approving and permitting the construction and installation of ubiquitous high-speed Internet infrastructure throughout Santa Barbara County so that each proposed broadband project can be evaluated in the context of the net contributions to advancing the official policy of the Board. A Countywide Programmatic EIR is intended to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), if required, effectively and efficiently to facilitate accelerated deployment of ubiquitous broadband infrastructure in the County.

Additionally, work is underway as part of the Santa Barbara County Broadband Strategy Plan to create a regional network concept based on the planning and participation of local governments, broadband providers, and the State of California's emerging Golden State Network (GSN). The next step of moving the concept to reality is the performance of a high-level design of areas that are gaps (projects necessary) to complete the network. The design should validate the overall concept and provide project definitions with sufficient detail to secure funding for detail design and engineering, the forecast of potential costs, and development of an operations model. In addition, identification of specific strategies for two focus areas, Los Alamos & Guadalupe, as last mile pilot is desired.

For the new portion of the application, the main categories of tasks include:

1. Continue stakeholder outreach and engagement.
2. Support SBCAG Board and committees to build on policy framework.
3. Form Joint Powers Authority for Broadband.
4. Provide support and capacity building for project implementation.
5. Obtain additional funding for project implementation and operations.
6. Coordinate education and outreach program to improve digital literacy.
7. Prepare yearly program evaluation and evolution.

Staff recommends the County submit a new LATA grant application in the amount of \$1,000,000 to assist with the costs associated with a Programmatic EIR, high-level network design, and formation of a Joint Powers Authority focused on broadband, and authorize the CEO, or designee to complete the Notarized Affidavit as part of the application packet. Staff will work with BCPC and SBCAG to complete the application packet.

Additional information about LATA grants may be found at the following link:

<https://www.cpuc.ca.gov/-/media/cpuc-website/divisions/communications-division/documents/broadband-implementation-for-california/lata-grantee-manual-062822.pdf>

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

There are no fiscal impacts at this time.

Special Instructions:

Please return one physical copy and one electronic copy of the executed Notarized Affidavit and the Letter of Support to Jasmine McGinty at jmcginty@countyofsb.org, ext. 3108.

Attachments:

Attachment A – Notarized Affidavit

Attachment B – Letter of Support

Authored by:

Jasmine McGinty, Principal Analyst, County Executive Office