



**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:** Departmental  
**Estimated Time:** 45 min  
**Continued Item:** No  
**If Yes, date from:**  
**Vote Required:** Majority

**TO:** Board of Supervisors

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

DocuSigned by:  
*Mona Miyasato*  
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**SUBJECT: Santa Barbara County Broadband Strategic Plan**

**County Counsel Concurrence**

As to form: Yes

**Auditor-Controller Concurrence**

As to form: N/A

**Risk Management:** N/A

**Recommended Actions:**

That the Board of Supervisors:

- A. Receive and file a presentation on the Santa Barbara County Broadband Strategic Plan; and
- B. Determine that the above actions are not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), because pursuant to section 15378(b)(5) of the CEQA Guidelines the actions consist of organizational or administrative activities of government that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment.

**Summary Text:**

The purpose of this item is to present to your Board and members of the public the Santa Barbara County Broadband Strategic Plan and discuss next steps for plan implementation. The presentation highlights the applicability and implementation of the strategic plan to the County. The Plan serves as a guiding document and tool for stakeholders to identify broadband needs, accelerate and improve planning efforts across the County and within communities, and provide data that will support applications for funding allocated to

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broadband initiatives. Work on the strategic plan commenced from January 2022 through November 2022 and was presented to the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG) Board of Directors on December 15, 2022. Staff recommends your Board receive and file a presentation from the Broadband Consortium of the Pacific Coast (BCPC) on the Santa Barbara County Broadband Strategic Plan.

### **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. The Broadband Consortium of the Pacific Coast (BCPC) in coordination with REACH, the Northern Santa Barbara County EconAlliance, local jurisdictions, and other key stakeholders 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. 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. Additionally, on [August 16, 2022](#), your Board signed the Memorandum of Understanding with the SBCAG Board, City of Buellton, City of Goleta, City of Guadalupe, City of Lompoc, City of Santa Barbara, City of Santa Maria, City of Carpinteria, and the City of Solvang for partnership on the broadband strategic plan project. Work on the plan commenced from January through November 2022.

### **Discussion:**

With funding in place, SBCAG staff and the consultant team from BCPC released a draft Santa Barbara County Broadband Strategic Plan on September 15, 2022, that was finalized in November. County staff participated on the SBCAG Technical Advisory Committee during the development of the plan. The final strategic plan approved by SBCAG is provided as Attachment A. It is also available on our [website](#).

The plan follows the lead of the statewide Broadband for All initiative and coupled quantitative research with community outreach forums and interviews to gather data that revealed opportunities for closing the digital divide across the County. The plan also included an assessment of countywide infrastructure resources and policies that engaged stakeholders and MOU partners, and community conversations were held which highlighted organizations improving affordable access and digital literacy. The plan provides a solution that guides Santa Barbara County's efforts to address the digital divide through infrastructure projects and the formation of a Digital Equity Coalition.

### **Next Steps**

With the Strategic Plan document complete, the focus will be to continue working with BCPC and SBCAG on progress towards implementation. Recommendations from the Plan for next steps include:

- Identifying grant opportunities and support grant work efforts,
- Participate in middle mile conversations,
- Partner with the Digital Equity Coalition,
- Engage with telecoms and providers to discuss public/ private partnerships, and
- Participate in a countywide JPA, if funding is received.

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.

Staff will also continue to coordinate broadband strategic planning efforts and identification of funding opportunities with the County's new Chief Information Officer. Through this collaboration, staff will update the Board as broadband efforts progress and as funding opportunities are identified. Staff will continue to collaborate with BCPC, SBCAG, and share information with Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC) on broadband implementation efforts. Staff has been in communication with RCRC on their broadband planning efforts which include development of a Request for Proposals for development of Broadband Strategic Plans for member counties and will continue to look for opportunities to align resources for regional projects.

### **Funding Opportunities**

With State and Federal Broadband funding widely available, staff will work in partnership with SBCAG and BCPC to identify funding. County staff along with SBCAG have already begun plan implementation by applying for the Local Agency Technical Assistance (LATA) grant from the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC). On [August 16, 2022](#), your Board approved and authorized County staff to apply for the LATA grant in the amount of \$500,000 to implement the Broadband Strategic Plan. This grant will be used for costs associated with a Programmatic EIR and high-level network design. By using findings in the Broadband Strategic Plan, staff can identify and apply for funding that will assist with broadband development and deployment in the County that will contribute to closing the digital divide. Based on input from the CPUC, staff requested on January 24, 2023, the current applications be withdrawn, and resubmitted as a new grant application consolidating the SBCAG original 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.

### **Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:**

There are no fiscal impacts associated with this item.

### **Attachments:**

Attachment A –Santa Barbara County Broadband Strategic Plan

### **Authored by:**

Jasmine McGinty, Principal Analyst