

Board of Supervisors  
September 12, 2023  
Page 1 of 8



**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
AGENDA LETTER**

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

**Agenda Number:**

**Submitted on:**  
(COB Stamp)

**Department Name:** County Executive Office  
**Department No.:** 012  
**For Agenda Of:** September 12, 2023  
**Placement:** Departmental  
**Estimated Time:** 30 Min  
**Continued Item:** N/A  
**If Yes, date from:** No  
**Vote Required:** Majority

**TO:** Board of Supervisors  
**FROM:** Department Director(s) Mona Miyasato, County Executive Officer  
Contact Info: Nancy Anderson, Chief Assistant County Executive Officer  
Brittany Odermann, Deputy County Executive Officer

**SUBJECT:** Update on County Broadband Efforts and Santa Barbara County Broadband Strategic Plan Implementation

DocuSigned by:  
*Mona Miyasato*  
41846F5C725B460...

**County Counsel Concurrence**

As to form: No

**Auditor-Controller Concurrence**

As to form: No

**Other Concurrence:**

As to form: N/A

**Recommended Actions:**

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors:

- a) Receive and file update on County broadband efforts and Santa Barbara County Strategic Plan implementation;
- b) Provide other direction to staff as necessary; and
- c) 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.

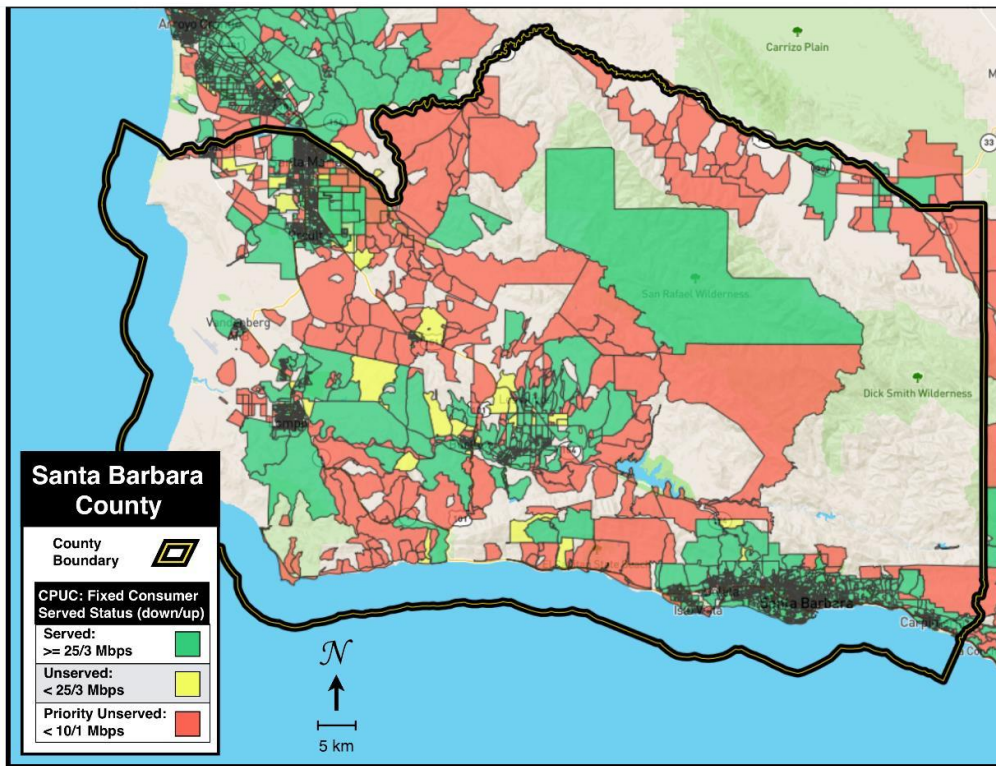
**Summary:**

This agenda item provides an update on efforts towards implementation of the Countywide Broadband Strategic Plan (Plan) that was completed and adopted in January 2023. The Plan developed a strategy for the County to work toward achieving digital equity and broadband access for our unserved and underserved residents. This presentation includes information about internal county work, including creation of a County Broadband Internal Work Group, an update on state and federal funding opportunities, and the status of partnerships with various agencies and stakeholders. While there is no policy action recommended to the Board today, as implementation efforts progress, staff will be providing updates and requesting policy and funding direction from the Board as needed.

**Background:**

Many initiatives are underway at the local, state, and federal levels to increase broadband or high-speed internet access to all. The [Countywide Broadband Strategic Plan](#) follows the lead of the Statewide Broadband for All initiative and serves as a guide 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 broadband initiatives.

In January 2023, the Countywide Broadband Strategic Plan (Plan) was completed in partnership with the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG) and the Broadband Consortium of the Pacific Coast (BCPC). The Plan, funded by contributions from the County and all city jurisdictions, identifies areas with gaps in high-speed internet access, with the goal of providing affordable and reliable access to all residents in the County as shown in Map 1 below. The final Plan was presented to the Board on January 24, 2023, and since then, County staff along with SBCAG have been working on Plan implementation, by: forming a County Broadband Internal Workgroup; identifying and applying for grants, such as the Local Agency Technical Assistance Grant (LATA), and the Last Mile Federal Funding Account (FFA); and identifying and developing partnerships with other public and private broadband stakeholders. Each of these current efforts are discussed in more detail below.



Map 1. Santa Barbara County Unserved and Priority Unserved Map

**Discussion:**

County Broadband Internal Workgroup

To formalize Plan implementation at a broader County level, the County Executive Office convened a Broadband Internal Workgroup comprised of multiple County departments to share information and strategize on broadband efforts throughout the County. This workgroup meets on a monthly basis and is led by the County Executive Office with support from the Information Technology Department and Chief Information Officer. The following departments participate in this workgroup: County Executive

Board of Supervisors  
September 12, 2023  
Page 3 of 8

Office, Information Technology Department, Public Works, Planning and Development, General Services, and the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments. The County is contracting with the Broadband Consortium of the Pacific Coast (BCPC) for consulting services to assist the work group on strategizing these implementation efforts.

To date, the group has been reviewing and considering the following recommended actions from the Plan:

1. *Achieving Access through Improved Broadband Infrastructure*
  - a. Participate in middle mile conversations.
    - Advocated for inclusion of Cuyama Highway 166 corridor in the California Broadband for All Middle-Mile Build Project.
    - Attended California Public Utilities Commission – Golden State Network workshop on Statewide Middle Mile during the Broadband Equity, Access, and Diversity workshop in Santa Maria on June 1, 2023.
    - Advocated for inclusion of Highway 135 and Highway 154 on the Golden State Network Maps.
  - b. Prioritize last mile deployment.
    - Coordinating with Rural County Representatives on Federal Funding Account Last Mile opportunity.
2. *Achieving Affordability and Adoption*
  - a. Partner with Digital Equity Coalition (DEC)
    - County Executive Office and Information Technology Department staff regularly participate in Digital Equity Coalition Steering Committee meetings. This coalition is led by the Santa Barbara Foundation and is made up of local non-profit organizations, education partners, and government agencies with the goal of closing the digital divide across all county communities. This workgroup creates partnerships, aligns resources, work efforts, and tools to achieve digital equity across the county through accessible connectivity, digital literacy and adoption, and accessibility for all.
3. *Achieving Resiliency and Redundancy*
  - a. Review/ Consider/ Adopt: Asset inventory, develop a dig once policy, determine conduit feasibility
    - Public Works and Planning and Development are reviewing other county examples of a “Dig Once Policy” and determining feasibility in the County of Santa Barbara. One example considered is [Nevada County](#).
  - b. Identify Grant Funding Opportunities
    - County Executive Office and Information Technology Department monitoring broadband grant funding opportunities.
    - County Executive Office and the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments are implementing Local Agency Technical Assistance grant (completed and awarded \$1M from the California Public Utilities Commission).
    - Coordinating with Rural County Representatives and the Broadband Consortium of the Pacific Coast on Federal Funding Account and Broadband Equity, Deployment and Access funding.

The internal workgroup will continue to build upon existing efforts and provide policy and funding considerations to the Board as needed to support these efforts.

#### Funding Opportunities

State and federal funding opportunities are beginning to quickly emerge requiring prompt action from local agencies interested in enhancing the availability of broadband services to unserved and underserved areas in their communities. The County is actively monitoring state and federal funding

Board of Supervisors  
September 12, 2023  
Page 4 of 8

opportunities with the assistance of the Broadband Consortium of the Pacific Coast (BCPC). To date, the County, in coordination with the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments, were successful in securing \$1 million in Local Agency Technical Assistance (LATA) funds, and are working in partnership with the Golden State Connect Authority/ Rural County Representatives of California on an application for Last Mile Federal Funding Account grant to build last mile infrastructure in three of the four identified priority areas in the Strategic Plan: Guadalupe, Cuyama/New Cuyama, and Casmalia. County staff will continue to track other funding sources such as the Broadband Equity, Access and Diversity (BEAD) funding (availability in 2024) and any additional state/federal funding opportunities as they emerge.

The Last Mile/Federal Funding Account (FFA) program will fund deployment of broadband infrastructure across California, with a focus on unserved/underserved areas, as delineated on the California Public Utilities Commission Federal Funding Account Last Mile program map.

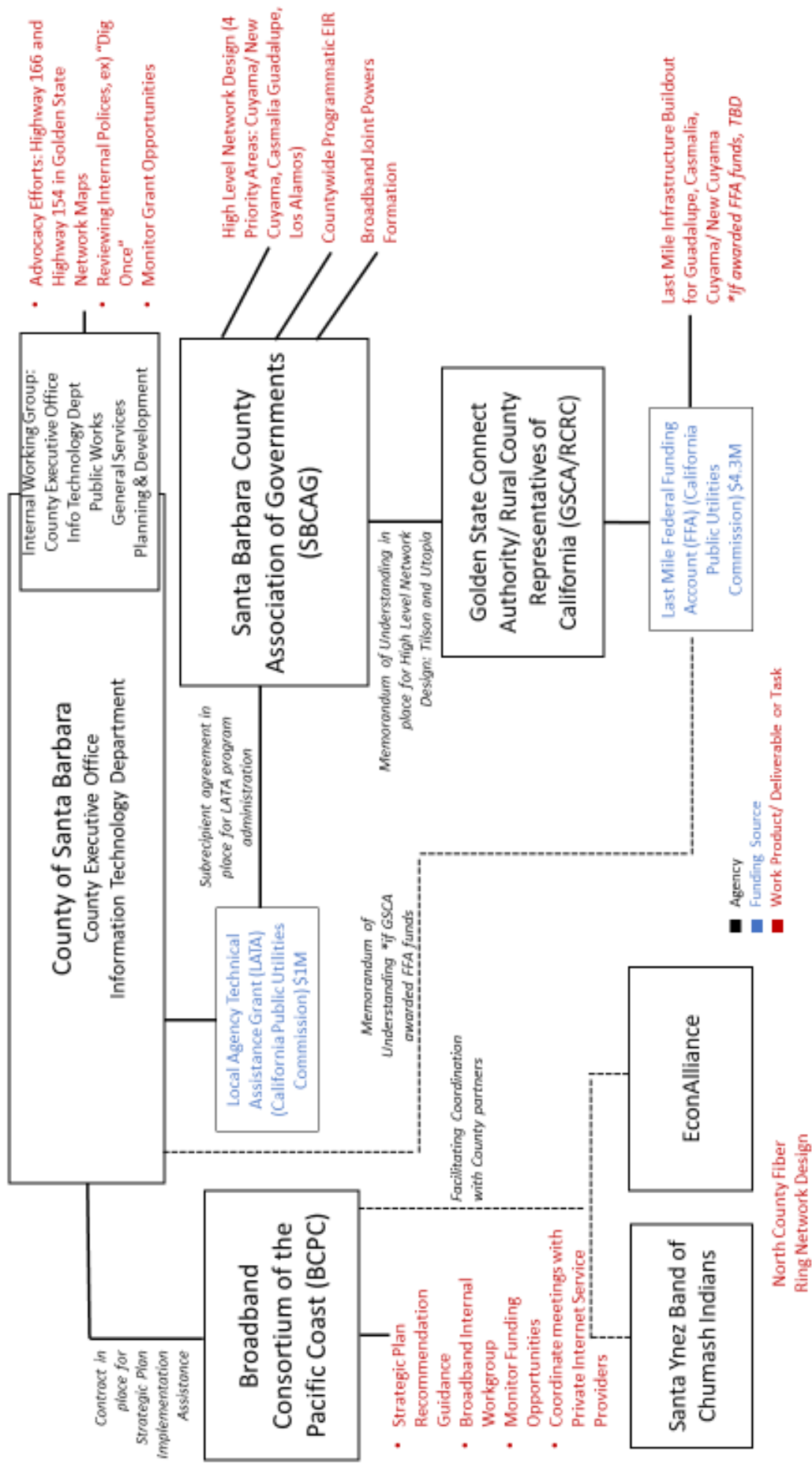
On August 29, 2023, your Board approved and ratified support and partnership with the Rural County Representatives of California to pursue Last Mile Federal Funding Account grant funding. Using a rigorous evaluation process, Golden State Connect Authority identified three of the four project areas in Santa Barbara County which they would like to apply for Last Mile grant dollars to construct based on our Local Agency Technical Assistance high level network design project: Guadalupe, Cuyama/New Cuyama, and Casmalia for a total grant request of \$4.3 million. The total project cost to build out last mile infrastructure for the three priority areas is approximately \$10.9 million, as assessed by contractors Tilson and Utopia.

The project area evaluation process considered: financial feasibility, technical feasibility, access to State Open-Access Middle Mile (Phase 1 only), number of unserved addresses that would be served, 75% of jurisdictional project areas in Low Income Census Blocks, and serviceability (clustering or density of project areas for maintenance). As such, the proposed project areas have been carefully selected to maximize financing and grant opportunities to construct the network, ensure the ability to maintain the network, and establish a strong foundation upon which to build the network.

If awarded Last Mile Federal Funding Account grant funds staff would return to your Board with the recommendation to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Golden State Connect Authority. Staff will work through the Internal Workgroup to provide local knowledge and expertise related to the County, including permit facilitation and identification of opportunities to use public real estate for placement of broadband infrastructure. The Memorandum of Understanding will not commit the County financially, other than use of public real estate as Golden State Connect Authority will own, operate, and maintain all fiber infrastructure.

Chart 1 below illustrates the connection between these funding opportunities and the partnerships involved in plan implementation.

Chart 1. Santa Barbara County Broadband Partnerships





Board of Supervisors  
September 12, 2023  
Page 6 of 8

### Partnerships

The Broadband Strategic Plan was developed in the spirit of coordination and collaboration amongst many partners and relationships, known as the Broadband Alliance for Santa Barbara County. The alliance was a formal partnership between the County, the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments, the cities of Buellton, Carpinteria, Goleta, Guadalupe, Lompoc, Santa Barbara, Santa Maria, and Solvang, the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians (Tribe), the Broadband Consortium of the Pacific Coast (BCPC), and regional economic development organizations, including EconAlliance. These are critical partnerships and staff plans to continue these conversations and leverage their expertise as we implement the Plan. It is important to continue these partnerships to ensure work is not being duplicated.

**Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG)** - Currently, the County has an existing agreement with the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments to implement the Local Agency Technical Assistance (LATA) grant program, which includes formation of a Joint Powers Authority focused on broadband. This action achieves regional planning and support for countywide resiliency and redundancy. Work on formation of the Joint Powers Authority began at the end of August. Ultimately the Joint Powers Authority will act as a regional broadband planning agency for the County and the eight jurisdictions. The work involved includes governance and oversight of fiber assets via shared ownership of the communities they serve.

**Golden State Connect Authority (GSCA) and Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC)** - In addition to creating this regional organization, the County and the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments work in close partnership with the broadband focused association Golden State Connect Authority through the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), which the County has been a member of since December 2021. Through this partnership, the County has been able to leverage their existing efforts and have Golden State Connect Authority apply for Last Mile Federal Funding Account (FFA) funding on behalf of Santa Barbara County.

**Broadband Consortium of the Pacific Coast (BCPC)** - Throughout the Plan development process and implementation phases, County staff have also been working closely with the Broadband Consortium of the Pacific Coast (BCPC) through regular coordination and participation in the Broadband Consortium of the Pacific Coast Advisory Group. The Broadband Consortium of the Pacific Coast Advisory group is part of a tri-county regional effort covering San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura counties through the Economic Development Collaborative (EDC). This group meets on a monthly basis to share resources and learn about the latest information on broadband deployment. County Staff from the County Executive Office and the Information Technology Department participate in these advisory group meetings.

In order to maximize Plan implementation, the County expanded its partnership with the Broadband Consortium of the Pacific Coast, per your Board's approval on August 29, 2023, by utilizing BCPC consultant services to assist the County Executive Office with broadband deployment.

**Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians and EconAlliance** – The County has also been in regular contact with the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians and local economic development agency, EconAlliance. This partnership has been imperative as the County has been able to share resources with EconAlliance and the Tribe on the work they have conducted in the North County. In December 2022, EconAlliance contracted with Teleworx, LLC to conduct a network design study in the area identified as the North County Fiber Ring. This project is funded by an approximate \$444,000 US Department of Commerce – Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant awarded jointly to the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians and EconAlliance. The study by Teleworx estimated completion of the project to be the end of September 2023. Additionally, Teleworx served as advisor to the Broadband Consortium of the Pacific Coast\ engaged by the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments during the development of the Plan

Board of Supervisors  
September 12, 2023  
Page 7 of 8

On July 31, 2023, County staff and the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments met with EconAlliance, Chumash and Teleworx to receive an update on their design work. Staff met with the Tribe on August 24, 2023 to discuss additional partnership opportunities on advocacy efforts for Highway 154 inclusion in the Statewide middle mile maps, which will be discussed in the “Advocacy Efforts” section of this Board letter.

### Advocacy Efforts

As additional state and federal funding opportunities emerge, broadband advocacy to ensure Santa Barbara County’s priority areas are addressed has been a focus of County efforts. The County has been actively participating in conversations with California Middle-Mile Advisory Council to ensure Santa Barbara County’s priority areas remain in the State’s Golden State Network Middle- Mile Broadband Initiative (MMBI) Project. SB 156 provides \$3.25 billion to build the necessary middle mile infrastructure to create an open-access middle mile network to bring equitable high-speed broadband service to all Californians.

To date, the County in partnership with the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments has advocated for the following at the state level:

- Inclusion of Cuyama Highway 166 corridor in the California Broadband for All Middle-Mile Build Project. In May 2023, the County in partnership with SBCAG engaged State Lobbyists, Hurst, Brooks, Espinosa (HBE) to encourage the inclusion of the Cuyama Valley Middle-Mile Build project as part of the Golden State Connect Network. At one point, the California Department of Technology (CDT) downgraded this project from a build-out to a type of joint lease agreement separating it from the Golden State Connect Network. This was concerning in that it made the project less certain and reliable for implementation. This resulted in the California Department of Technology reevaluating the removal and included Highway 166 on Phase I of the Golden State Network (GSN) Maps for the State’s middle mile build. The Cuyama Highway 166 Corridor was identified as a priority area in the Plan.
- Inclusion of Highway 135- Los Alamos corridor on Phase II of the Golden State Network maps. As the Los Alamos area was identified as a priority area in the Plan, the County in partnership with the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments advocated to continue to keep this area on Phase II of the Golden State Network map, as it has been one of the highest-priority regions.
- Inclusion of Highway 154 on Phase II of the Golden State Network maps that was removed by the California Department of Technology as of July 21, 2023. According to the California Department of Technology, the decision to remove was affected mainly by cost, given the difficult topography. It has been estimated that broadband build along Highway 154 would cost \$750,000 per mile for a total of 32 miles. The County has also been in conversation with the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians on advocating for Highway 154 in any middle-mile build-out efforts. While Highway 154 was not identified as a priority unserved area in the Plan, Highway 154 is deemed a critical piece for middle-mile to create stronger resiliency and redundancy in an emergency-prone area. Removal of Highway 154 in its entirety from the proposed Phase II buildout is disappointing and poses significant challenges to local priority planning efforts to build resiliency, redundancy, and safety networks in the region. Staff will continue to advocate for this important broadband route including specific language in the County’s 2024 federal and state legislative platforms for the Board’s consideration later this year.

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

The development of broadband access throughout the County is a significant investment of resources and County staff time. Securing state and federal funding in coordination with other local jurisdictions, organizations, and private internet service providers will be instrumental in the affordability of implementing the Plan. While cost per mile varies dependent upon terrain and deployment type (aerial

Board of Supervisors  
September 12, 2023  
Page 8 of 8

or underground), generally, broadband infrastructure projects are multi-million-dollar projects. Cost estimates range from simple (\$300,000 per mile) to difficult (\$1 million per mile) with a statewide average of \$641,000 per mile cost to build. Therefore, due to high costs associated with infrastructure build out, implementation of the Plan is assumed over many years not months.

**Attachments**

Attachment A – Broadband Strategic Plan Recommended Actions

**Authored by:**

Jasmine McGinty, Principal Analyst, County Executive Office

**cc:**

Chris Chirgwin, Chief Information Officer, Information Technology Department