

Broadband

February 2024

Team Members

- Brad Johnson, Department Analyst
- Kate Fosburgh, Digital Access Project Coordinator
- Katherine DiPasqua, Director

Infrastructure & Deployment

Federal Funding Account Update:

- In December the Sonoma County Broadband Team brought an update to the Economic Development Advisory Board outlining the process, effort, and intent of the objection period for the Federal Funding Account. With the objection period, and the subsequent 28-day rebuttal period over, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) has turned their focus to reviewing the 484 grant applications submitted across the state of California. Previous indications were that funding awards would be announced in March 2024, but that has been changed to June 2024.

Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Funding Update:

- The Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program is a \$42.5 billion national funding opportunity for broadband infrastructure deployment and is administered nationally by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). The State of California has been allocated \$1.86 billion under the BEAD program and will be administered by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) on the state level. We are currently working with the most up-to-date data to inform BEAD application project prioritization. We plan to bring this information before the Board of Supervisors on Tuesday, July 9th. We anticipate the application window will open sometime between mid-Summer to early-Autumn.

Meeting with Golden State Connect Authority (GSCA)

- The Sonoma County Broadband Team had a kickoff meeting with GSCA and Tilson Technology to begin the process for the development of low-level (shovel ready) engineering design. We selected the order of priority for low-level design project order, which is as follows: Jenner, Walsh Landing, East Santa Rosa, and East Cloverdale. We are working with the Department of Public Infrastructure to select power hub sites as part of the low-level design for each project. The first 40 miles of low-level design will be paid for by the Local Agency Technical Assistance (LATA) Grant. The remainder will be paid for through ARPA funding allocated to low-level design by the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors in August 2023. We are preparing a new MOU to execute with GSCA to allow for use of ARPA funds to expand low-level design.

AT&T Application: Relief of Carrier of Last Resort Obligation- Oppose

- As a "Carrier of Last Resort" (COLR), AT&T is required to provide landline phone service upon request to any residence or business within its service territory. AT&T submitted an application to the CPUC to be released from this obligation for over 99% of their service territory where AT&T determines another provider exists and does not request a replacement COLR. Landline service remains an important and reliable safety tool. This change could impact rural Sonoma County residents, especially in emergency situations. COLR relief should not be granted without securing widespread alternatives. Much of the rural community is still underrepresented and underserved, lacking universal access to reliable, secure and open networks. For these reasons, the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors sent a letter to the California Public Utilities Commission requesting they to reject AT&T's application.

Advanced Adoption

Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)

- **Wind Down: The ACP has stopped accepting new applications as of February 8th, 2024.** The future of the program remains unknown. Unless more funding is secured, the program is expected to run out of funding in April 2024.
- Approximately 19% (13,660) of eligible households in Sonoma County are enrolled in ACP, as of November, 2023.
- A letter urging Congress to extend funding for the ACP was sent from the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors on February 15th.
- We have suspended all ACP outreach activities through our FCC ACP Outreach Grant pending more information about the future of the program.

CA Emerging Technology Fund Regional Broadband Consortia Leadership Grant

- Kate Fosburgh was selected as the new Deputy Manager for the North Bay North Coast Broadband Consortium
- California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF) invited Digital Equity Coalition members, including the North Bay North Coast Broadband Consortium, to a policy forum and reception in Sacramento on March 6th. Brad and Kate plan to attend to represent the Sonoma County Broadband Team and the North Bay North Coast Broadband Consortium.