

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR HOLLY J. MITCHELL

September 13, 2022

Deepening the County's Commitment to Equitable Deployment of Enhanced Regional Broadband Infrastructure - Establishing an Intergovernmental Broadband Coordinating Committee

Local governments must increase access to the digital tools needed for our residents to succeed in school, work, and life. This is fundamentally an equity issue as nationwide and in Los Angeles County (County), the digital divide continues to disproportionately impact Black and Latino or Hispanic households, as well as those with lower incomes and educational attainment. Federal broadband funding through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) marks one of the largest public investments in connectivity since the creation of the Interstate Highway System in 1956. We now have a once-in-a-generation opportunity with BIL, the American Rescue Plan, and other Federal and State funding programs, to achieve digital equity. Yet, maximizing the effectiveness of this funding to crush the digital divide will require regional coordination across each of the 88 municipalities and the County's unincorporated areas.

Over 428,000 households in the County do not have home internet subscriptions. These households are largely concentrated in low-income communities of color. On August 31, 2021, the Board of Supervisors (Board) adopted a [motion](#), "Utilizing Existing Infrastructure and Resources to Accelerate Digital Equity" to assess viable options for the County to facilitate residential access to reliable broadband service in low-income

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communities where greater than 20% of the households lack internet service, instructing the Internal Services Department (ISD) to lead this effort. Moreover, on November 16, 2021, the Board unanimously adopted a [motion](#), “Investments to Accelerate Digital Equity” to accelerate its efforts on the digital divide and clarify roles and responsibilities. In less than one year, ISD, having been named the lead on Digital Equity efforts in the County, has made significant progress on all aspects of both motions. ISD’s competitive solicitation for public-private partnerships to provide community broadband has yielded a shortlist of qualified bidders who are eager to provide reliable high-speed service in areas of the County that rely on legacy technologies and that are often served by only a single internet service provider.

This week, ISD announced a master services agreement for several pre-qualified firms to deploy a community broadband network more quickly in heavily underserved areas using public assets to deploy internet access to the surrounding community. This groundbreaking approach serves as a last mile solution for households not currently served by or not able to afford broadband access. Cities throughout the country have used the County’s approach as a best practice - advancing similar models in preparing to compete for BIL funding. For example, Miami is attaching broadband access underneath its rail lines in parks and open spaces, and the Philadelphia Office of Innovation and Technology is looking for ways its public assets can support digital equity, with a Request for Information due at the end of September.

However, with significant Federal investment available, it is rare that this funding would be allocated for a specific objective without a local coordinating entity or office in place. While each State will receive a formula allocation of funding under BIL, States and local jurisdictions can also compete for over \$1 billion in funding for middle-mile projects via the Enabling Middle Mile Broadband Infrastructure program. We must move toward regional coordination in a directed manner if we are to draw down our equitable share of funding and ensure that we have a future proof solution that integrates the needs of the County and our 88 incorporated cities in one place.

Building on accelerating the success of ISD’s efforts, and in recognition that world-class broadband and digital equity are essential to residents and businesses, the County

should lead an intergovernmental coordination effort to secure our fiber future including: sharing and scaling the public-private partnership models it is developing; promoting the effective use of State and Federal grant programs, including the coordinated deployment of funds among jurisdictions in the County; and sharing resources and best practices to ease administrative burdens and expedite broadband deployment.

The County has a responsibility to put resources into this historic opportunity to crush the digital divide and improve the quality of life for its residents. Creating a County Director of Digital Equity position to lead the intergovernmental coordination effort will enable the County to coordinate across Departments, with other jurisdictions, and among industry leaders and advocates. This position should be housed within ISD, the department leading our County's efforts to close the Digital Divide.

I THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

1. Direct the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), in consultation with the Director of the Internal Services Department (ISD), to identify within 30 days an appropriate existing item which can be immediately available to hire a new County Director of Digital Equity to serve full-time, in an executive management-level position to be housed at ISD; and present to the Board any ordinance amendments to account for any needed classification changes as part of the CEO's routine classification Board letter process.
2. Direct the Director of Digital Equity to collaborate with ISD to establish the Intergovernmental Broadband Coordinating Committee (IBCC) which shall serve as a Countywide, intergovernmental coordinating entity for the purposes of expanding affordable and reliable internet access across jurisdictions and designate the Director of Digital Equity as the convener of the IBCC. Instruct the Director of Digital Equity to report back to the Board in writing on structure and duties of the IBCC in 120 days. This structure should include:
 - a. Recommendations for a legal framework to establish the IBCC that encourages participation from all stakeholders, including but not limited to, advocacy, technology, and economic development; and

- b. A proposed membership model for jurisdictions to participate in the IBCC, with membership being primarily drawn from Councils of Governments and incorporated cities in the County.
3. Direct the Director of Digital Equity to draft a Charter for the IBCC and report back to the Board in writing in 180 days with a draft Charter for adoption. The Charter shall:
 - a. Establish and outline a program to provide technical assistance to IBCC members for the pursuit of State and Federal funding, including coordinating grant applications and sharing technical grant writing resources;
 - b. Propose a set of goals for the IBCC that include, but are not limited to, expediting broadband infrastructure deployment and adoption, increasing data transparency related to Broadband access, and improving digital literacy in the County; and
 - c. Address the roles and responsibilities of the IBCC, including but not limited to its role in coordinating broadband deployment, sharing publicly owned assets, sharing information among members, and exploring the design of a Countywide Broadband Authority.
4. Direct the Director of Digital Equity to coordinate with organizations that are specifically focused on digital equity, including the Los Angeles Digital Equity Action League, in response to the above referenced directives.
5. Direct the Director of Digital Equity to report back to the Board on the progress of Directives 1 and 2 as part of ISD's ongoing quarterly Delete the Divide reports.

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