

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS HILDA L. SOLIS

November 16, 2021

AND HOLLY MITCHELL

Investments to Accelerate Digital Equity

It is widely agreed that internet connection is as fundamental a household service as water and electricity. Yet over 365,000 households in Los Angeles County do not have internet access. This is particularly true in low-income households of color.

On August 31, 2021, the Board of Supervisors (Board) unanimously adopted a motion to assess viable options for the County of Los Angeles to facilitate residential access to reliable broadband service in low-income communities that lack internet service. The Board instructed the Internal Services Department (ISD), in consultation with the Chief Executive Office and County Counsel, to return in 30 days with a report that identified options, cost estimates, and, to the extent possible, a funding source that would enable implementation of internet access to begin within the current calendar year of 2021. The report submitted by ISD identified three options for consideration:

- Option A: Agreements with Internet Service Providers and Telecommunication Companies

MOTION

MITCHELL _____

KUEHL _____

HAHN _____

BARGER _____

SOLIS _____

The County would fund the cost of residential access to existing broadband networks for up to 300,000 households. This option involves leveraging the County's contract assets and purchasing capacity to negotiate more affordable service plans with internet service providers and telecommunication companies. This option is expected to be short-term and the negotiated pricing would not likely exceed 3 years.

- Option B: Community Wireless Network

A 2-year proof of concept model utilizing public-private partnerships to deploy Citizens Broadband Radio Service (CBRS) and/or millimeter wave technologies in delivering reliable wireless high-speed internet service to approximately 12,500 households. This option includes a workforce program to employ individuals from the impacted communities to serve as "Digital Navigators" to assist residents with broadband education, equipment set up, and troubleshooting. This option also includes contracting with a managed service provider to oversee logistics, operations and customer service.

- Option C: County-Administered Municipal Broadband Service

An investment in fiber optic networks through public and/or public-private partnerships to deploy reliable high-speed internet service, including fiber-to-the-home. The projected long-term benefits include a more resilient internet for residential households and County facilities, catalyst for widespread deployment of fifth generation (5G) technology for wireless networks, and lower County operating costs at scale compared to alternative internet delivery methods. This option would

offer the most robust, fastest and reliable service. This option would also include a workforce program and managed service provider similar to Option B.

The County must accelerate efforts to support the delivery of affordable and reliable high-speed internet service to communities that are adversely impacted by the digital divide. All three of the above-mentioned options are viable solutions to providing internet service and could be implemented concurrently or in phases.

Another approach that should be considered is to offer greater assistance to constituents in applying for existing financial subsidies through State and Federal programs that will lower the cost of internet services. For example, the Emergency Broadband Benefit is a Federal program that provides eligible households up to \$50 per month towards broadband service and a one-time discount of up to \$100 to purchase a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet.

The Federal Administration and the State are offering local jurisdictions an unprecedented level of investment dollars to delete the digital divide once and for all. Most recently, President Joe Biden signed the federal Infrastructure bill that allocates \$65 billion nationwide for broadband internet. The County cannot bankroll these services or build our infrastructure alone. So, we must be prepared to submit vetted proposals for federal and State funding to develop the infrastructure necessary to provide low-income residents with affordable, high quality and high speed, sustainable internet service.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors:

- 1. Establish the County's lead department.**
 - a. Designate the Internal Services Department (ISD) as the lead department

responsible for ensuring the County's efforts on all community broadband infrastructure and residential service initiatives to close the Digital Divide are coordinated and aligned under the County's Digital Divide Action Team, which is comprised of representatives from all County Departments and the Chief Executive Officer's Chief Information Office (CIO).

2. Conduct a Countywide campaign on financial subsidy programs.

- a. Instruct the Chief Executive Office (CEO), in consultation with ISD, to identify funding for a countywide promotional campaign to inform and educate constituents about financial subsidy programs that will assist with the costs of computers and internet service.
- b. Instruct ISD through the Delete the Divide initiative to coordinate the countywide promotional campaign on subsidy programs, specifically the Federal Emergency Broadband Benefit. Additionally, the campaign should encourage the participation of all County Departments and, as appropriate, collaborations with internet service providers, telecommunication companies, school districts, regional consortia, community-based organizations, non-profits, and ethnic and hyperlocal media. Outreach must be conducted in the County's multiple threshold languages.

3. Expand and/or enter into new agreements with the County's existing broadband and/or carrier agreements for public access and use.

- a. Instruct and authorize ISD to negotiate agreements with assistance from County Counsel and input from the CEO, with internet service providers and telecommunication companies and if the proposed agreements can be shown

by ISD to be in the County's best interest, return to the Board for approval to execute new agreements or amend existing agreements.

4. Provide options for internet solutions, including cost estimates and timeline, that meet the digital needs of our most vulnerable residents: affordability, sustainability, and connectivity to high speed, quality service.

- a. Authorize ISD to amend its agreement, as needed, with the contractor that assisted in the development of its report to the Board in response to Item 45G of the August 31, 2021 Agenda, to perform additional analysis for the options identified in the aforementioned report and provide program development services for future solicitations.
- b. Instruct ISD to administer a competitive solicitation to acquire a Managed Service Provider to coordinate and manage implementation of the Community Wireless Network. The scope of work should include, but not be limited to, project management, infrastructure design, system integrations, performance requirements, equipment testing and maintenance, administration of resources, and customer support services.
- c. Instruct ISD to administer a competitive solicitation and negotiate agreements for public-private partnerships to construct and configure the Community Wireless Network.
- d. Instruct CEO, in consultation with ISD and DPW to identify funding from Federal, State and/or County sources to support a five (5) year proof of concept model for a Community Wireless Network. Under the coordination of ISD, this pilot will utilize public-private partnerships and a Managed Service

Provider for the deployment of a fully functional network of Citizen Broadband Radio Service and/or millimeter wave technologies to deliver reliable high-speed internet service to 12,500 households in digital divide target areas.

- e. Delegate authority to the CEO to hire a consultant to conduct a financial and technical feasibility study for a County-administered municipal broadband service. The study should assess capital costs and consumer pricing models that will enable reliable high-speed internet access for households in digital divide target areas. The study should also consider existing County assets and licensing agreements as well as the utilization of public and private fiber optic and wireless network infrastructures that can be included in the County-administered strategy.

#

HLS:tof

AGN. NO.