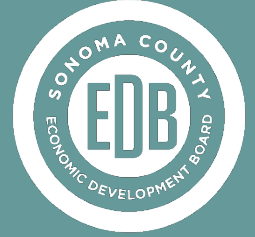


June
-
8th
-
2021

Economic Development Board | BOS Meeting

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ACCESS SONOMA BROADBAND ACTION PLAN

*Exploring the creation of a public broadband entity
to close Sonoma County's digital divide*



www.SonomaEDB.org

PURPOSE

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- The Access Sonoma Broadband Action Plan explores the creation of a publicly governed broadband entity.
- A public entity could deploy, own, and manage broadband infrastructure within Sonoma County, reducing the cost barriers for broadband providers and closing the regional digital divide.



HISTORIC CHALLENGES

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- Growing digital divide
- Broadband infrastructure
- Broadband adoption
- Ability to serve
- Funding availability



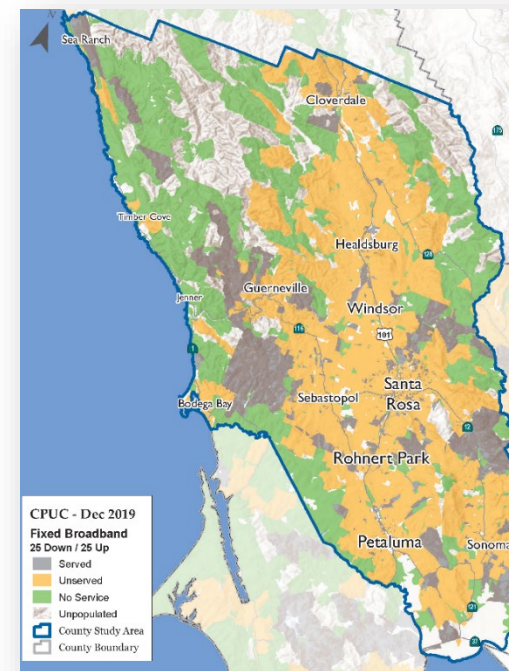
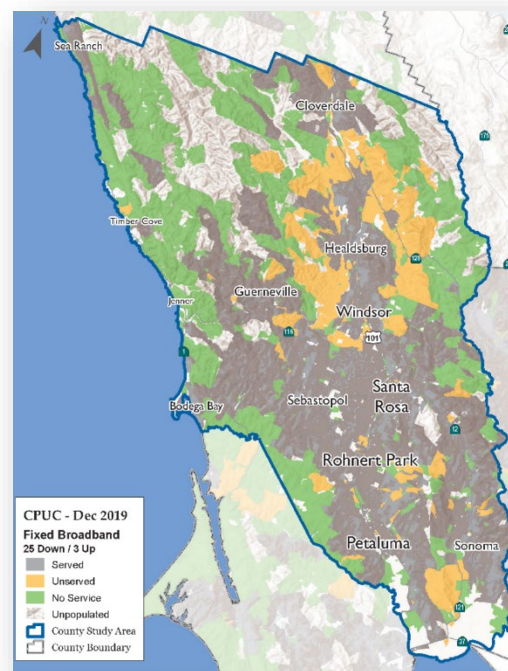
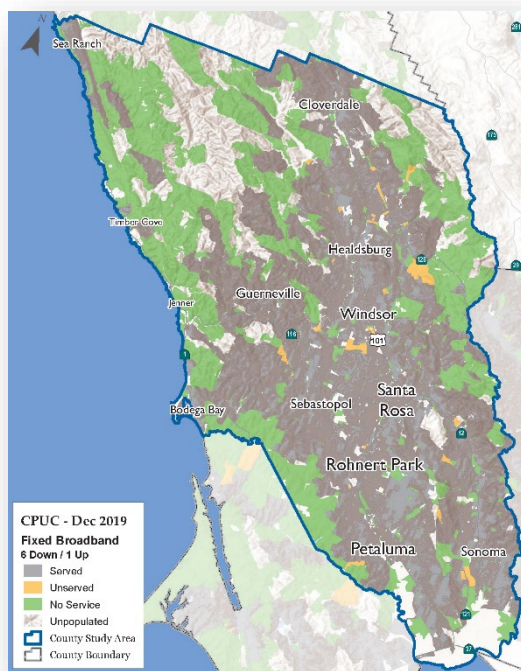
A photo of two girls using WiFi outside of a Taco Bell has recently become a symbol of the digital divide.

BROADBAND AVAILABILITY

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These maps show the growing digital divide based on the current status of broadband in Sonoma County (yellow = unserved). As broadband dependency rises, the availability of adequate broadband services becomes increasingly scarce.



May 25, 2021

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BROADBAND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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Industry support

- Education
- Public safety
- Agriculture
- Healthcare
- Tourism
- Business
- Government

Economic Impacts

- Recovery and resiliency
- Job creation/retention
- Increased economic investment
- Livability

SONOMA COUNTY STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT

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Sonoma County prioritized expanded community access to technology in the Five-Year Strategic Plan, and the Access Sonoma Broadband Action plan aligns with the County's Strategic Plan, particularly Goal 4 of the Resilient Infrastructure Pillar:

- **Goal 4: Implement countywide technological solutions to promote resiliency and expand community access.**

Objective 1: Leverage funding and seek grants to expand communications infrastructure within the community to improve equitable access to broadband, wireless, and cell phone services.

Objective 2: Leverage existing fiber optic infrastructure and grant opportunities to expand wireless and broadband access across County.

STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

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- State and federal grant funding for local government networks
 - CPUC, EDA, USDA, NTIA, and more to be determined.
- County owned assets
 - Conduit, fiber optics, county communication towers
- Public private partnerships
 - Asset leasing/sharing



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PUBLIC-PRIVATE-PARTNERSHIPS

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- Open access infrastructure
 - Long term solution
 - Allows public and private entities to lease the same assets at wholesale affordable pricing
 - Lowers barriers of entry to high cost areas
 - Promotes affordability and competition
 - Aligns with state and federal priorities
- Community based programs
 - Technology training, adoption, and affordability

ACTION PLAN

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Action Items

- Outreach and Analysis
 - EDB creates technical advisory committee to support project development
 - Research and analyze governance structures for Access Sonoma Broadband
- Organization
 - Formalize recommended governance structure
 - Develop business plan
- Infrastructure projects and adoption programs
 - Develop projects and programs
 - Secure funding using new entity, business plan, and shovel/implementation ready projects

Budget

- EDB will analyze state, federal and private funding opportunities to support the scope of work and return to BOS for budget requests as needed.

ACCESS SONOMA BROADBAND HIGH-LEVEL NETWORK DESIGN

- Develop network in multiple phases.
- Network starts along 101 corridor (backbone) using existing assets (WiTel conduit, SMART fiber)
- Branches out east and west (middle-mile) to reach unserved communities
- Connect to county communication towers, government facilities, anchor institutions, businesses, and residential homes (last-mile)
- Network design may expand to reach other unserved areas as necessary



TIMELINE

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Outreach and Analysis

- 1-6 months
 - Analyze governance structures
 - Evaluate funding and grant management resources
 - Return to BOS with recommended governance structure for approval

Organization

- 6-12 months
 - Formalize organization with required agencies
 - Secure seed funding for network and program development

BOS RECOMMENDED ACTION

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- Accept the Economic Development Board's Broadband Action Plan, and receive an update on next steps
- Direct EDB staff to evaluate optimum organizational/governance models for the execution of the Action Plan
- Adopt Budget Resolution to adjust the FY 2020-21 Economic Development department budget establishing appropriations for consultant, grants procurements, and legal services; financed from available FY 2020-21 General fund contingencies