SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE, STATE OF CALIFORNIA

ITEM: 3.2
(ID # 18957)
MEETING DATE:
Tuesday, May 10, 2022

FROM :   BOS DISTRICT 3:

SUBJECT: Supervisor Washington and Supervisor Perez: Status Update and Direction on the Riverside County Broadband Master Plan, All Districts. [$0]

RECOMMENDED MOTION: That the Board of Supervisors:
1. Receive and file this status update from the Executive Office and RCIT to the Riverside County Broadband Master Plan;
2. Direct the Executive Office to establish a broadband committee consisting of county departments and outside organizations to address the digital divide;
3. Direct the Executive Office to work with each District office on identifying projects and funding that best serve their community with internet services; and
4. Direct the Executive Office to release a Request for Proposal for a consultant to assist the County of Riverside in identifying and applying for Broadband grant opportunities.

ACTION:

Supervisor Chuck Washington, Supervisor 3rd District   5/5/2022

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

On motion of Supervisor Washington seconded by Supervisor Perez and duly carried by unanimous vote, IT WAS ORDERED that the above matter is approved as recommended.

Ayes:	Jeffries, Spiegel, Washington, Perez, and Hewitt
Nays:	None
Absent:	None
Date:	May 10, 2022
xc:	Third District, E.O.

Kecia R. Harper
Clerk of the Board
By: _____
Deputy

FINANCIAL DATA	Current Fiscal Year:	Next Fiscal Year:	Total Cost:	Ongoing Cost
COST	$ 0	$ 0	$ 0	$ 0
NET COUNTY COST	$ 0	$ 0	$ 0	$ 0
SOURCE OF FUNDS: N/A			Budget Adjustment: No	
			For Fiscal Year: 21/22	

C.E.O. RECOMMENDATION: Approve

BACKGROUND:

Summary

Broadband services are now recognized as an essential service for communities across America. From students attending classes from home to seniors connecting with physicians via telehealth visits online, the way we interact with one another has changed. Today residents across the county need reliable, affordable and accessible internet services.

In partnership with federal, state, regional and local program providers and stakeholders, Riverside County continues to lead the pursuit of broadband solutions for our community.

According to data published by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), the lead federal agency responsible for the regulation and oversight of internet service providers in the nation, a significant number of households in Riverside County's unincorporated communities do not have the minimum amount of internet service. The current minimum standard of internet service is 25 megabits per second (Mbps) of download speed and 3 Mbps upload, generally expressed as 25/3 Mbps. Megabits are units of measure for internet activity. The higher the number of megabits per second, the faster the internet connection.

Riverside County continues to take action to close the digital divide in our county. Beginning in 2015, Riverside County launched two important initiatives. First, the Digital Equity Program (DEP) which focuses on the refurbishment and donation of computers to non-profit organizations supporting Riverside County residents. Second, the Broadband Master plan and RivcoConnect (RivcoConnect.org) which has driven our efforts to bring internet services to residents who lack access due to affordability and to residents who lack connectivity to their home.

In December 2020, Riverside County adopted an updated broadband resolution (Board Item #3.45 December 8, 2020) supporting federal, state, and regional efforts to improve access through support of federal subsidy programs, including the Emergency Broadband Benefit program (EBB) and now the follow-on Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), as well as support of construction of new and improved connectivity for households in areas of the county that are not served or are underserved with poor quality internet service.

This two-prong approach to closing the digital divide in Riverside County, promoting access to the internet, and donation of computers, coupled with community provided computer literacy training, will be supported by our Next Steps and Opportunities detailed below.

Next Steps and Opportunities:

Establish Broadband Leader and Committee:

1. The County of Riverside Broadband Master Plan and Policy includes a designation of a broadband leader. This individual will lead the strategic plan by developing a plan of action, working with stakeholders on identifying project areas, coordinating the implementation of policies, participating in the development of the subsidy program, monitoring affiliated projects and programs and reporting to the Executive Office on the progress. The County Information Officer (CIO) was designated as the coordinator for implementing policies related to broadband and digital inclusion. RCIT CIO, Jim Smith, assigned Chief Data Officer, Tom Mullen, on an interim basis to continue to move these efforts forward.

   The next steps:

   - Designate the Chief Data Officer for the County of Riverside, Tom Mullen, as the County Broadband Leader.

   - Continue coordination and collaboration with the CIO.

   - Establish a Broadband Committee with participation from internal county departments such as Housing and Workforce Solutions (HWS); Department of Public Social Services (DPSS), Transportation Land Management Agency (TLMA), Executive Office and RCIT and representation from outside agencies, such as Inland Empire Regional Broadband Consortium (IERBC). The purpose of this committee is to collect, share and use expertise to develop and enhance programs that will close the digital divide.

2. Develop and release a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a consultant to assist the county in building a plan that includes updating our broadband strategy, development of a local broadband needs assessment, a communication plan, buildout plan, and identification of grant and funding opportunities that are available from the passage of state and federal legislation, including the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). The IIJA project criteria and funding has not yet been released but are intended for projects such as broadband middle mile and last miles construction, and internet subsidy for qualified households. Broadband maps are being developed by the federal government to identify unserved households with an anticipated publication in Summer 2022. Once the maps are complete, then funding will be revealed for California.

3. Monitor progress on the state middle mile projects within Riverside County. Provide input as permissible including in the CVAG Middle Mile Advisory committee as it continues to monitor funding and develop projects that tie into local construction of communication pathways. The map titled Middle-Mile Broadband Initiative Initial Projects included in the report Attachment A, identifies the 18 middle mile projects approved in the state.

   a. Current projects within Riverside County:

      i. Construction within the Coachella Valley, connecting to Palm Springs, Indio, Coachella and the unincorporated communities of Thermal, Meca and eastern areas of the Salton Sea, generally along Interstate 10, Highways 111, and 86 south to Imperial County.

      ii. Construction from Anza, south through the Cahuilla Indian Reservation, Aguanga to San Diego County, generally along Highway 371 to the 79 south.

   b. The California Middle-Mile Broadband Initiative website: https://middle-mile-broadband-initiative.cdt.ca.gov/

4. Review existing policies and land use regulations for opportunities to promote the inclusion of broadband in all public buildings and construction projects, residential and commercial development projects, and all major infrastructure and transportation projects.

   a. Review and add as necessary policies to the General Plan and land use ordinances to require the installation of broadband connectivity in all new commercial and residential development.

   b. Review and update polices as necessary requiring the installation and use of broadband connectivity in publicly subsidized development projects, including public housing.

   c. Develop and implement a Dig Once policy, that when feasible, whereby conduit is installed for future or immediate use for wireless towers, fiber optic or other comparable broadband network installation, whenever underground construction occurs in a roadway.

   d. Seek out and identify economic development opportunities, including grants and test bed opportunities associated with the deployment of Broadband facilities and services throughout the county by public or private entities.

5. Statewide studies, most recently completed by the California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF) and the University of Southern California (USC) identified affordability as barrier preventing many families from crossing the digital divide and impacting access to broadband services at home.

   a. The county will evaluate the FCC internet subsidy program, the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), and develop a campaign (to be incorporated into the communication plan) to increase the enrollment of eligible households. Existing EBB recipients will be transferred automatically to the new ACP program by internet

provides and as authorized by the federal government. The funding for ACP comes from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), which was signed by President Biden on November 15, 2021.

The EBB program offered $50 per month for internet service to qualified individuals. By design EBB was a short-term program that reinforced the need for long-term financial support for qualifying households and individuals who would otherwise not have access to internet because of lack of funding. The new ACP proposes to follow the same qualifying criteria as EBB; however, the subsidy is reduced to $30 per month. It is expected that this program will continue for five to ten years. At the time of this writing, it is anticipated that receipt of connected devices may also be part of the program.

b. The IIJA also includes grants for programmatic efforts around equity. As of this writing, it is understood that this funding will be divided up half to the states and the other half to localities and non-profits. As more information becomes available, the county will evaluate the types of programs these grants may fund and apply for funding accordingly.

6. Utilize American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding per Board approval on October 19, 2021 (Item 3.5) and February 8, 2022 (Item 3.3) to support and promote expanded broadband access and adoption.

   a. The Executive Office is working with each supervisorial district to define a project area to expand access and adoption of broadband services.

   Each project shall consist of an analysis of the barriers and potential solutions, which can include hard infrastructure, types of equipment, identification of digital literacy, affordability and advocation with providers in the area. A focused individualized workplan shall be developed for each project.

   The Executive Office has already received feedback from three districts. District 1 project will focus on the areas of Mead Valley and Good Hope. District 4 project areas are Thermal and Mecca. Whitewater and Cabazon will be the project areas for District 5. The maps below indicate the project areas.

7. The county continues to explore opportunities to participate with internet service providers as an "anchor tenant". An anchor tenant is a customer who agrees to a multi-year service contract, providing longer term revenue in exchange for needed broadband service. The establishment of this service to a county facility can facilitate new internet access to nearby and surrounding neighborhoods, without the need for additional construction expenses, removing one economic barrier.

8. The following Project Areas have identified communities where broadband infrastructure or financial subsidy is needed to close the digital divide. We will work with each board office to
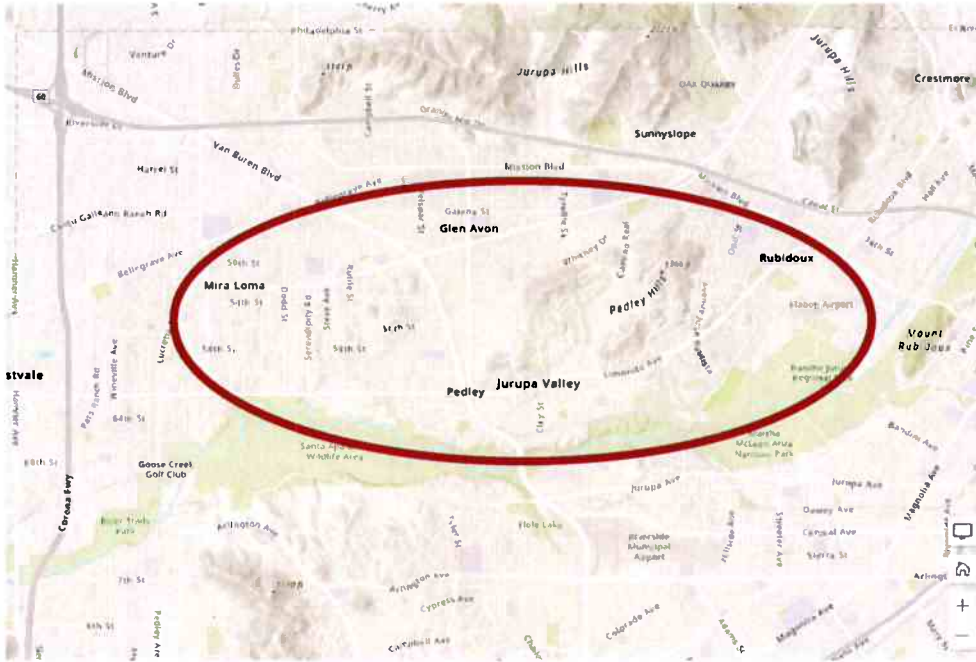
ensure communities in all areas of the county are represented and targeted for participation in available broadband projects as allowable by available resources and funding.
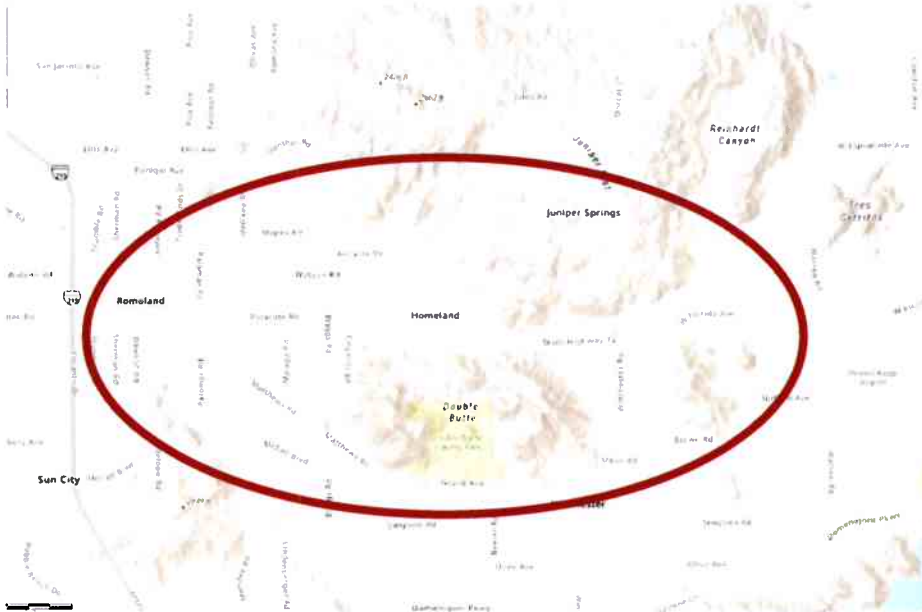
1st District Broadband Project Area
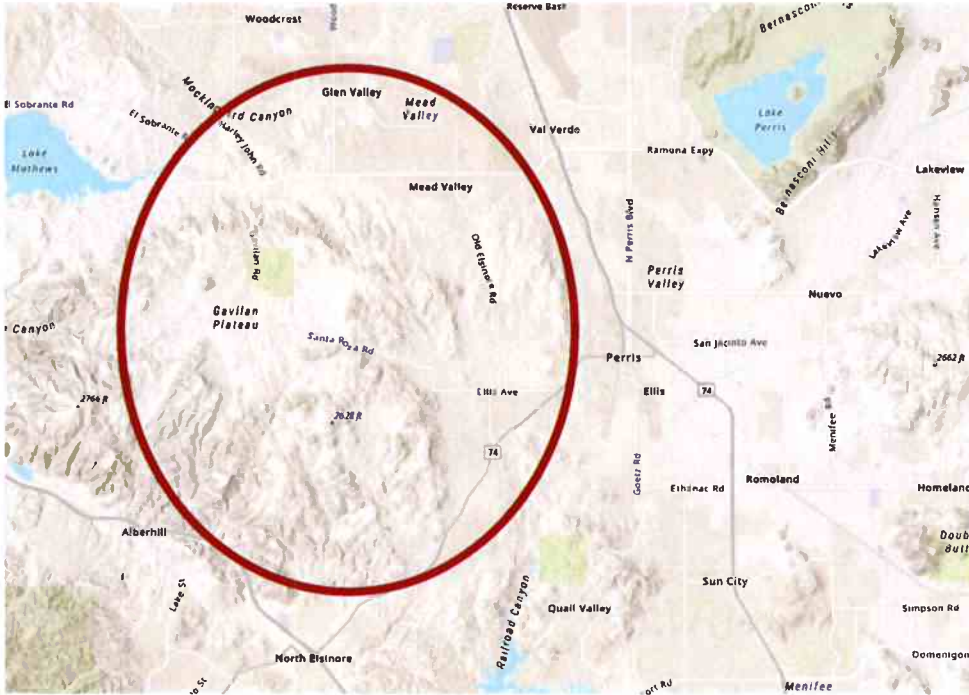
2nd District Broadband Project Area

3rd District Broadband Project Area

4th District Broadband Project Area
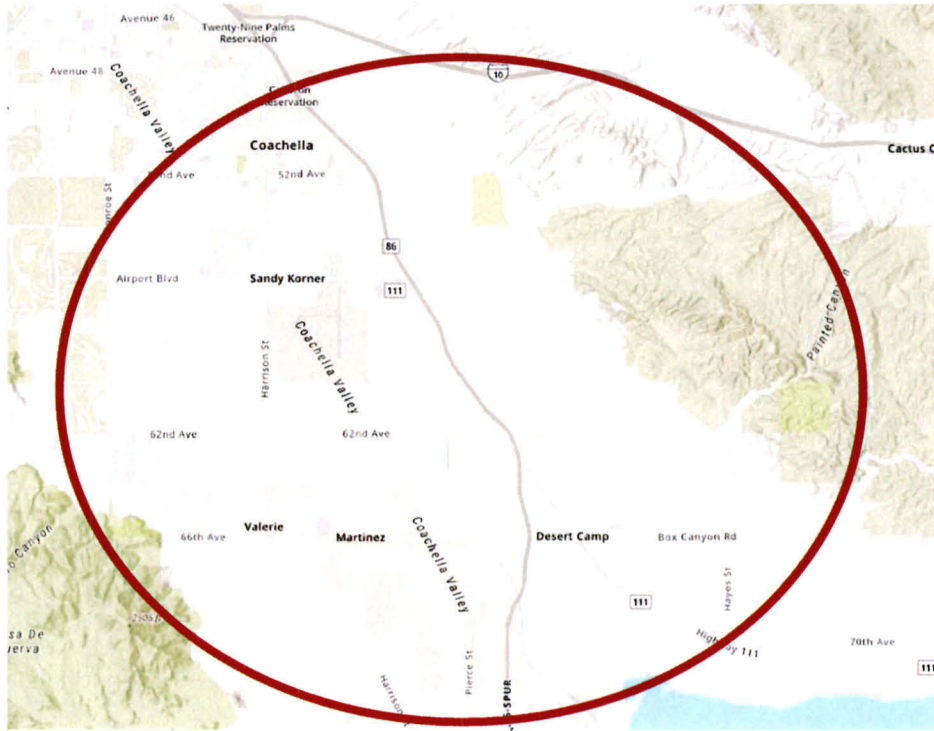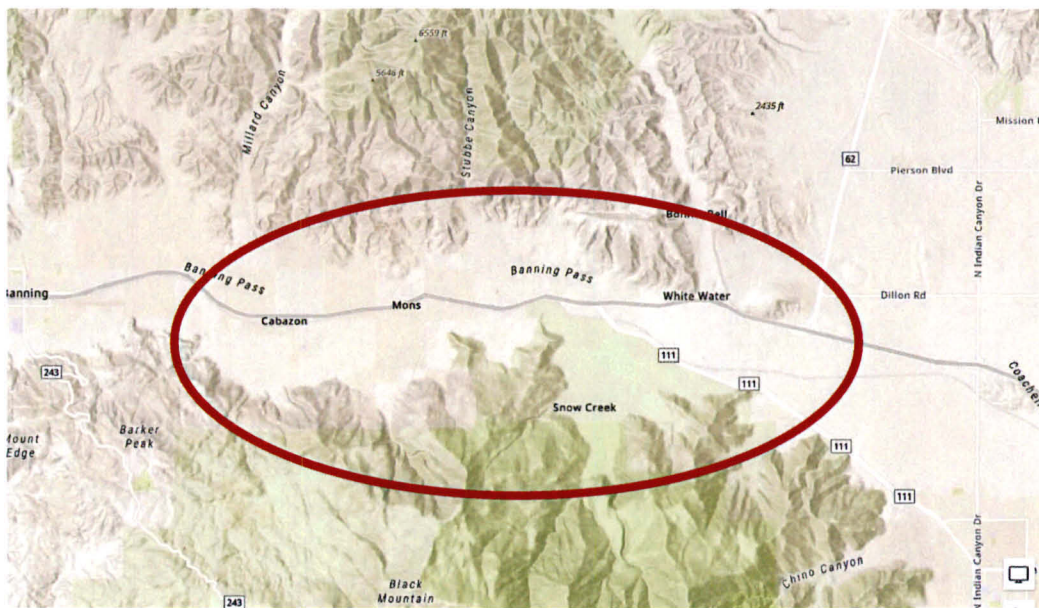
5th District Broadband Project Area

Impact on Residents and Businesses

Closing the digital divide will have significant positive long-term impact to the residents and businesses of Riverside County. As the county efforts progress, 1 Gbps connectivity will become available to more and more communities, businesses, and schools, bringing about enormous improvements in technology accessibility, community infrastructure, and our overall regional economy.

ATTACHMENTS (if any, in this order):

SCHEDULE A.   **BUDGET ADJUSTMENT**
No change to past requirements.

ATTACHMENT.   **CHANGE ORDER REPORT**
Include a table like the one below.

NUMBER	AMOUNT	PERCENT	DESCRIPTION
	Original contract amount		
All previously-approved COs	Total CO cost of all previously approved COs	Cost/original	
CO number	CO cost	Cost/original	Brief description, including cause, and whether initiated by county or contractor
(Add additional lines for multiple COs)			
	New total contract cost	Total COs/original	CO total and new contract total

Additional description and details of new change order(s) – one or two paragraphs for each.

ATTACHMENT C.   **PERSONNEL CHANGE and ORDINANCE 440 REPORT**
No change to past requirements.

Attachment A

The Following is an update of accomplishments and continued efforts related to the Broadband Master Plan.

Today internet services are needed in the home, just as electricity and plumbing are required for safe and healthy living. All levels of governments including public safety and emergency response agencies, to transportation, social services, regulators, and administrators provide recent, historical, and real-time information about import events, emergencies, or services available within our communities.

The federal minimum standard of internet service is 25 megabits per second (Mbps) of download speed and 3 Mbps upload, generally expressed as 25/3 Mbps. The higher the number of megabits per second, the faster your internet connection.
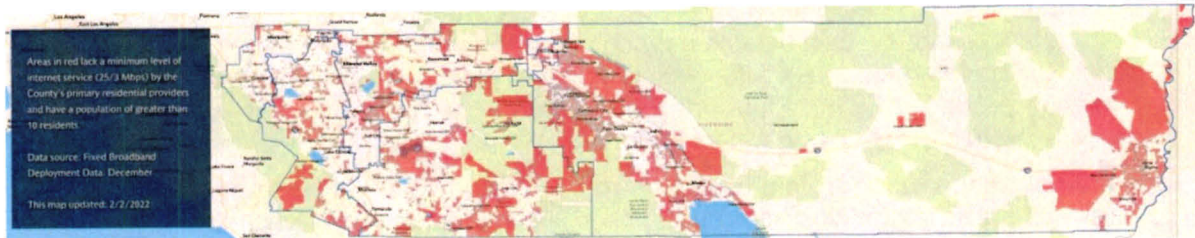
Areas in red lack a minimum level of internet service (25/3 Mbps) by the County's primary residential providers and have a population greater than 10 residents.

According to data published by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), the lead federal agency responsible for the regulation and oversight of internet service providers in the nation, a significant number of households in Riverside County's unincorporated communities do not have the minimum 25/3 Mbps standard level of service. The FCC utilizes the US Census Bureau definition of rural, as an unincorporated community with less than 50,000 residents.

On September 20, 2016 (Agenda Item 3.11), the Board approved the Riverside County Master Plan, a Broadband Policy, and Resolution No. 2016-197. Together these actions set in motion the creation of a multi-year program that led within the region and state the active promotion of improved broadband services within the county. The Broadband Master Plan included multiple strategies, which were mostly based on the issuance and award of a Request for Participation (RFP) for the buildout of a broadband network by private sector organizations. Although the RFP was successfully issued and responded to, no award was made based on the lack of alignment of offerings from the private sector participants. The county did continue forward and has accomplished many of components of the plan and the "RivcoConnect" initiative addressing the "Digital Divide." RivcoConnect is the county's branding illustrating on-going efforts.

Resolution No. 2020-262 brought forward by Supervisor Perez on December 8, 2020 (Item 3.45) provided the county with a focus toward the collaboration with regional partners, the seeking of

funding opportunities, development of expedited permitting, adoption, and execution of the dig once approach, and the development of a way to address cost and affordability.

Actions Taken to Improve Broadband Services, Improve Online County Services, and Close the Digital Divide within Riverside County:

Public Services:

1. On August 4, 2020 (Item 3.5), via a Form 11 by Supervisor Perez, the Board approved an allocation of CARES funding in the amount of $10 million to the Riverside County Office of Education (RCOE) Foundation on behalf of RCOE's All for One Campaign. Riverside County Workforce Development administered the agreement between RCOE and the county. RCOE fully expended the $10 million allocation, purchasing 29,757 computer devices and 7,879 mobile hotspots to facilitate access to online learning and educational support services for public K-12 students in 19 school districts.

2. RivcoConnect initiative includes a public website (Rivcoconnect.org) where residents can find news and access to low-cost service offerings available from local internet providers, AT&T, Charter/Spectrum and Frontier. The website is being updated to include the latest broadband information published by the State and Federal governments, as well as updating relevant maps with more current data to reflect the many efforts taken and underway.

3. Efforts have been made to improve upon the county's website both to support the online provision of public information and critical services and to engage citizen participation. county departments post appropriate policies, programs, plans, ordinances, and key information online.

4. An enterprise Geographic Information System (GIS) is now in place and available to all county departments supporting approximately 1,000 active current users.

5. The Office of Economic Development (OED) reports that 35 of the 36 county libraries have 1Gbps speed, with the remaining one (Lake Tamarisk) soon to follow.

6. The county promotes the use of public spaces, such as libraries, parks, the county administrative center, and workforce development centers, as broadband hot spots, providing free wireless internet access while onsite.

7. On October 19, 2021 (Item 3.5), the Board of Supervisors approved the establishment of the category for Infrastructure under the ARPA 1st Installment Plan, which included a Broadband assistance program.

Computer Donations and Digital Literacy Training:

1. The Digital Equity Program (DEP) was approved by the Board on January 17, 2017 (Item 3.43). The award-winning program has donated more than 5,000 computers and related IT equipment to non-profit organizations serving county residents.

2. More than 6,000 surplus computers and related equipment, such as printers, scanners, and monitors have been repurposed within county departments and agencies.

3. In total, the DEP has repurposed and donated approximately $5,000,000 worth of surplus county computing equipment.

4. Digital literacy training is provided by county partners, including Riverside and Val Verde Unified School Districts to the families of their students. Upon completion of the training the families receive a county donated computer, monitor, keyboard, mouse and officially licensed Microsoft operating system and Office suite.

5. All county employees are provided digital literacy training, include information security training during orientation and ongoing online trainings requirements.

6. Continue to integrate digital literacy training into all workforce development programs. The Workforce Development Division of the county has historically integrated digital literacy into its service delivery through work-readiness workshops and in-person computer assistance in our Workforce Development Centers and Youth Opportunity Centers. However, the pandemic magnified the digital divide and amplified the role of digital literacy across occupations and sectors. As a result, the Division is expanding the quantity and scope of computer-related vocational skills workshops by contracting with an outside provider procured through RFP.

Land Use and Smart Infrastructure:

1. An extensive inventory was taken of county facilities that could be leased or utilized to support to expansion of broadband access within the county. The inventory can be found on RivcoConnect.org and includes property location, department or agency within the facility, size and ownership status (leased or owned).

2. Expedited permitting is provided for the installation of broadband and cellular infrastructure and towers. Additional actions are needed to establish broadband service as a fundamental requirement when approving new construction and development.

3. As identified as an action item within the Broadband Master Plan, Riverside County Information Technology (RCIT) adopted internal policies and practices for the deployment of software defined networks for county facilities.

4. Riverside County's commercial grade, tier III equivalent data center, RC3, provides a secure and reliable facility for the county and private sector customers. This facility provides redundant primary and back-up power, diverse internet connections from nation carriers, and onsite capabilities to support operations in the event of regional emergency.

Partnerships/Interagency Cooperation:

1. Regional cooperation between counties, cities, and organizations including the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG), Coachella Valley Association of Government (CVAG) and the Western Riverside Council of Government (WRCOG), the Inland Empire Regional Broadband Consortium (IERBC), and the California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF), sharing information, policy concepts, project funding opportunities, advocacy for better internet service data, and discussion of mutual broadband needs.

2. The county is a founding member and participant in the Inland Empire Regional Broadband Consortium (IERBC), which addresses the broadband technology access, planning, service reliability, affordability, infrastructure requirements, costs and needs in the region, which includes San Bernardino and Riverside Counties.

3. The Western Regional Council of Governments (WRCOG) and Coachella Valley Association of Governments (CVAG) adopted the County of Riverside's 2016 Broadband Resolution (No. 2016-197) supporting the county's broadband master plan, issuance of the request for participants, and deployment of gigabit broadband to all homes, business and institutions within the count. CVAG and WRCOG represent all 28 cities and the county within Riverside County. The regional approach to broadband was unique and created a model for other regions to follow.

4. Riverside County is a key member of CVAG which has incorporated the deployment of broadband infrastructure in their CV Sync road and traffic signal management project occurring throughout Coachella Valley. The inclusion of broadband infrastructure resulted from an ad-hoc roundtable discussion on broadband with city, county, and tribal managers.

Below is the proposed CV Sync broadband deployment map. The plan is to connect key anchor institutions, including the desert campuses of California State University San Bernardino (CSUSB) and University California, Riverside (UCR), College of the Desert, Riverside County Office of Education (RCOE) in Indio, and K-12 schools, to new high-speed broadband infrastructure. Additionally, CVAG's CV Sync project is the basis for expanded service to be provided by the California Middle Mile Network to be built between Palm Springs and the Salton Sea, extending south into Imperial County. Future expansion of the network to Sky Valley and Mecca are also under consideration as depicted as the dashed lines on the below map.
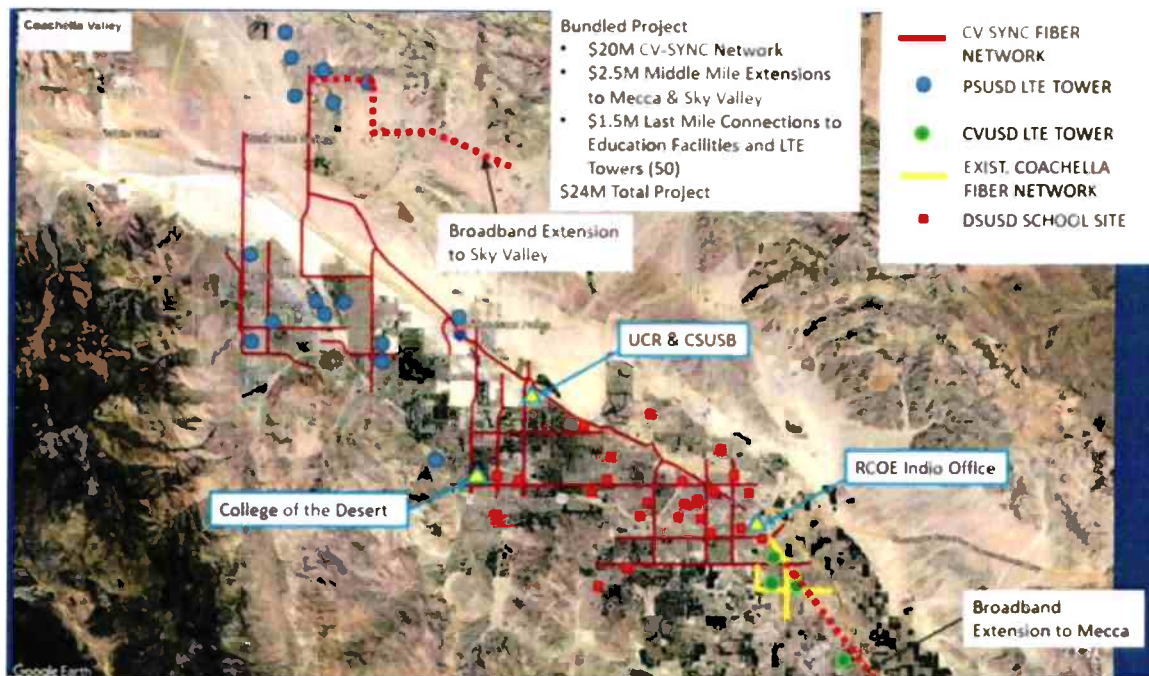
5. Southern California Edison offered their broadband infrastructure as part of the RivcoConnect RFP process. This significant network is available for lease to Internet Service Providers (ISPs), adding another option for new pathway and access to communities with limited or no current service.

6. Riverside County successfully supported the California Public Utilities Commission's (CPUC) award to Anza Electric a series of broadband grants totaling $4.458 million. This important funding, presented in two grants of $2.662 on 12/2015 and $1.796 on 5/2018 respectively, were coupled with $1.475 million in self-funding from Anza Electric to create a fiber network in the Anza region. This award-winning project has resulted in affordable and reliable high speed internet service for this rural area of the county. The map below shows the project area.
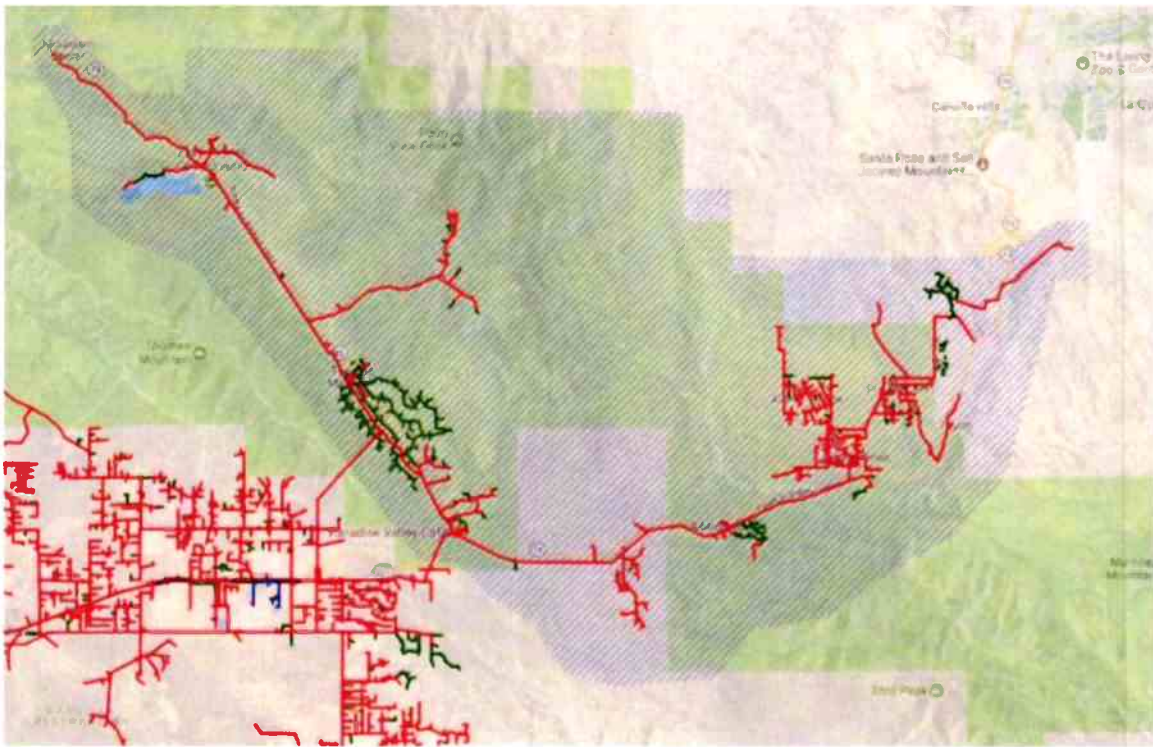
Anza Electric Broadband Service Map for the communities of Anza, Mountain Center, and Pinyon Pines, centered around Highways 371 and the 74.

7. The county continues to collaborate with the Inland Empire Regional Broadband Consortium (IERBC), Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG), and the California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF) on regional and state broadband deployment efforts.