



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

1600 PACIFIC HIGHWAY, ROOM 335, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA 92101-2470

AGENDA ITEM

COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
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DATE: October 8, 2013
TO: Board of Supervisors
SUBJECT: Broadening Access To Our Wireless World (DISTRICTS: ALL)

Overview

The world is going wireless and San Diego County is at its epicenter. From the widely-known groundbreaking Qualcomm Inc., with its dominating smart phones and device technology, to the lesser known InterDigital, America's most profitable company per employee, our region is living and breathing the digital revolution.

Unfortunately, a large number of San Diego County residents remain without reliable access to high-speed Internet, a shortcoming that has the potential to handicap our ability to train and nurture the next generation of digital savvy employees, innovators and entrepreneurs. Officials from the San Diego County Office of Education and San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) share with us similar stories of young students being sent home with digital devices to conduct school work, only to lack within their homes a connection to the Internet necessary to complete assignments.

This issue is not unique to San Diego County, or indeed the state and nation. The state of California has recognized the disparity of broadband access through the California Advanced Services Fund, which uses a tax on cell phone bills to plug holes in the broadband network. Still, the Public Policy Institute of California reports 23 percent of residents of San Diego County lack access to broadband Internet services.

In San Diego County, the San Diego Unified School District is preparing to take the lead on a technology advancement program that would include exploring methods for boosting broadband access to students.

The County of San Diego should have a seat at this table in order to help explore options for boosting broadband delivery beyond SDUSD boundaries.

Cities like Kansas City and Austin are plunging ahead with huge infrastructure programs to offer a basic level of universal wireless broadband to all residents, with primary funding from Google. The County of San Diego, and all participants in this effort, should, too, solicit the involvement of Google and other large telecommunications providers.

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However, waiting for Google or another technology giant to come in and shoulder the main effort is not a strategy for success. Such an approach would instead be akin to waiting for the railroad companies a century and a half ago. Taking an active, forward looking and collaborative approach now with other interested jurisdictions, industry, and leaders will help us lay the groundwork to be ahead of the economic curve and to position our region, and our children, for an even more successful future. We need to gather our best, brightest and most innovative, outline the possibilities, make decisions, set achievable deadlines and get to the task at hand.

We ask you to please support the recommendations before you today.

Recommendation(s)

SUPERVISOR RON ROBERTS AND SUPERVISOR DAVE ROBERTS

1. Request that the Chief Administrative Officer direct the county's Chief Information Officer to join with the San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) and San Diego County Office of Education on putting together a technology committee that can propose options for increasing the availability of broadband in San Diego County, in particular to underserved individuals and communities.
2. Authorize Supervisors Ron Roberts and Dave Roberts to serve as the Board's liaisons to the newly formed technology committee studying the digital divide and to bring back to the full board at the appropriate time a report on steps the County of San Diego could take to encourage and support the wider availability of broadband to county residents.

Fiscal Impact

None.

Business Impact Statement

None.

Advisory Board Statement

None.

Background

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Unfortunately, a large number of San Diego County residents remain without reliable access to high-speed Internet, a shortcoming that has the potential to handicap our ability to train and nurture the next generation of digital savvy employees, innovators and entrepreneurs. Officials from the San Diego County Office of Education and San Diego Unified School District

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(SDUSD) share with us similar stories of young students being sent home with digital devices to conduct school work, only to lack within their homes a connection to the Internet necessary to complete assignments.

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Our situation is similar, and actually better than most. Solutions are actively being brought forward. In Los Angeles County, for example, the California Emerging Technology Fund is focused on bringing broadband to underserved communities. It most recently invested with the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles and non-profit organizations to develop a model to connect Los Angeles public housing residents to WiFi. In Sacramento, legislation recently placed before Governor Brown for his signature will offer other communities help to fund similar initiatives.

In San Diego County, the San Diego Unified School District is preparing to take the lead on a technology advancement program that would include exploring methods for boosting broadband access to students. It is doing so, in part, by using funding available from its Proposition Z, a 2012 bond measure that included funding for upgrading classroom instructional technology. The District's i21 Committee is being led by Trustees Scott Barnett and Richard Barrera with lead staffing from SDUSD's new chief technology officer.

The County of San Diego should have a seat at this table in order to help explore options for boosting broadband delivery beyond SDUSD boundaries. The County of San Diego also should assist in bringing to this working group representatives from the region's thriving telecommunications industry, along with the San Diego County Office of Education as a representative of the 42 school districts educating nearly 500,000 students throughout the region. Dr. Randy Ward, the superintendent of the County Office of Education, already has signaled an eagerness to move this effort along.

The County of San Diego has demonstrated across many platforms its expertise in using wireless technologies to deliver improved and better services to residents, from wireless devices carried by health care professionals to a series of apps that can help you check out a book or cope with an emergency. In addition, among the assets the County of San Diego brings to the table is an extensive inventory of property and a long history of accommodating the needs of the telecom industry through properly sited antennas and transmitters. Indeed, the county to date has contracts with eight providers for devices in nearly 38 locations.

While this committee purposefully will not presuppose any one solution, there are a number of options available, ranging from supporting the development of a widely-available basic-speed wireless broadband service that also allows individuals to "buy up" to faster connections, to the use of cellular broadband that is device specific for those who meet income and need standards.

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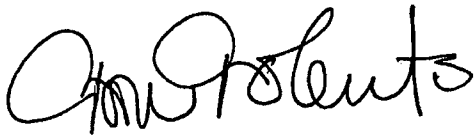
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Linkage to the County of San Diego Strategic Plan

Respectfully submitted,



RON ROBERTS
Supervisor, Fourth District



DAVE ROBERTS
Supervisor, Third District

ATTACHMENT(S)

N/A

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AGENDA ITEM INFORMATION SHEET

REQUIRES FOUR VOTES: Yes No

WRITTEN DISCLOSURE PER COUNTY CHARTER SECTION 1000.1 REQUIRED
 Yes No

PREVIOUS RELEVANT BOARD ACTIONS:
N/A

BOARD POLICIES APPLICABLE:
N/A

BOARD POLICY STATEMENTS:
N/A

MANDATORY COMPLIANCE:
N/A

ORACLE AWARD NUMBER(S) AND CONTRACT AND/OR REQUISITION NUMBER(S):
N/A

ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT: Supervisor Ron Roberts, Supervisor Dave Roberts

OTHER CONCURRENCES(S): N/A

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