

NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF THE DRAFT PROGRAM ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT FOR THE SANTA BARBARA COUNTY LAST-MILE BROADBAND PROGRAM

A Notice of Availability (NOA) is being issued by Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG) for the Santa Barbara County Last-Mile Broadband Program (“Broadband Program” or “Project”) (State Clearinghouse No. 2024051301). A description of the Project and its location is provided below. SBCAG is the lead agency under the California Environment Quality Act (CEQA) for the Project and has completed a Draft Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) in accordance with the requirements of CEQA. This NOA is being circulated pursuant to CEQA.

A Draft PEIR has been prepared to evaluate and inform the public and decision-makers of the potential environmental impacts from implementing the Project.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW FINDINGS: The Draft PEIR has identified potentially significant impacts to air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, energy, global climate change, noise and vibration, tribal cultural resources, and utilities and service systems - telecommunication facilities. However, mitigation measures are provided that reduce such impacts to less than significant levels. Please see below for how you can submit comments and view the Draft PEIR and related documents.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD: SBCAG invites comments on the adequacy and completeness of the environmental analysis and mitigation measures described in the Draft PEIR. Comments on the Draft PEIR can be submitted to SBCAG in writing Beginning Friday, November 22, 2024, until 5 p.m. on Friday, January 10, 2024. Written comments can be submitted via U.S. Postal Service to SBCAG at 260 North San Antonio Road, Suite B, Santa Barbara, CA 93110; or electronically by emailing info@sbcag.org.

The Draft PEIR, along with all referenced documents is available online at www.sbcag.org. It can also be reviewed in person during business hours. Please contact SBCAG to schedule time to review the document at (805) 961-8900 or info@sbcag.org.

PROJECT LOCATION: The area subject to future broadband facility installations under the proposed Project includes the entire County of Santa Barbara, since, with a few exceptions, the specific locations of future broadband facility installations are currently not known. Such future installations would be proposed and implemented as part of the Broadband Program, where appropriate, in order to provide adequate high-speed broadband internet services to underserved and unserved communities as priority communities and funding sources are identified. However, a total of nine communities in the County have already been identified as Priority Areas under the Broadband Program and are evaluated at a project level of detail in the Draft PEIR.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The Santa Barbara County Last-Mile Broadband Program (Broadband Program or Project) would facilitate the future expansion of high-speed broadband internet network throughout the County of Santa Barbara (County). The Project would facilitate the implementation of future

broadband infrastructure installations in various communities across the County that are currently underserved or unserved by high-speed broadband internet services. The Project involves last-mile broadband installations that have already been designed for nine such communities identified as Priority Areas for broadband service under the Broadband Program. The broadband facility installations could include both underground and aerial fiber optic cable as part of proposed “last-mile” broadband facilities, which are intended to reach end users in these affected communities. These last-mile facilities would provide connections to end users in communities across the County and connect from the State of California’s “middle-mile” broadband network (Statewide Middle Mile Network) currently being implemented by the California Department of Technology (CDT).

In general, the new fiber optic lines would be installed underground following public or private roadways with the intention to minimize or avoid disturbance of roadway surfaces wherever feasible. However, it is possible some fiber optic lines could be installed directly under roadways in areas with limited shoulder space or where existing conduit under the road may be used, thus avoiding new surface disturbance. The Project also includes installation and construction activities within those areas where lateral lines are installed between public or private roadways and individual businesses or residences. Individual residence or business connections typically would be installed within previously disturbed and/or developed areas (e.g., adjacent to driveways or in landscaped areas), and generally would avoid drainages and sensitive habitats. Lateral alignments would typically follow other utility installations. Although not anticipated, where subsurface installation of fiber optic cable is infeasible, aerial installation along existing utility poles will be undertaken.

Components to be installed/constructed within the nine Priority Areas include the following: broadband conduit (i.e., rigid casing to protect fiber optic cables from physical damage and the elements) with diameters between ¾-inch and 2 inches to be installed within road rights-of-way (ROWs); aboveground, prefabricated walk-in hut/shelters made of aggregate wall materials; small aboveground steel distribution cabinets/enclosures; distribution fiber, splice points, and drops; drop hubs; and small underground structures such as hand holes. Additional Project components that may be necessary to connect end-users to the middle-mile broadband network may include utility poles with aerial fiber and connection points, underground fiber markers, and signage.

Once constructed, the broadband network components would generally operate passively, with only incidental maintenance typically consisting of weed abatement and periodic accessing of hand holes and splice cases from the ground surface along a given alignment.