

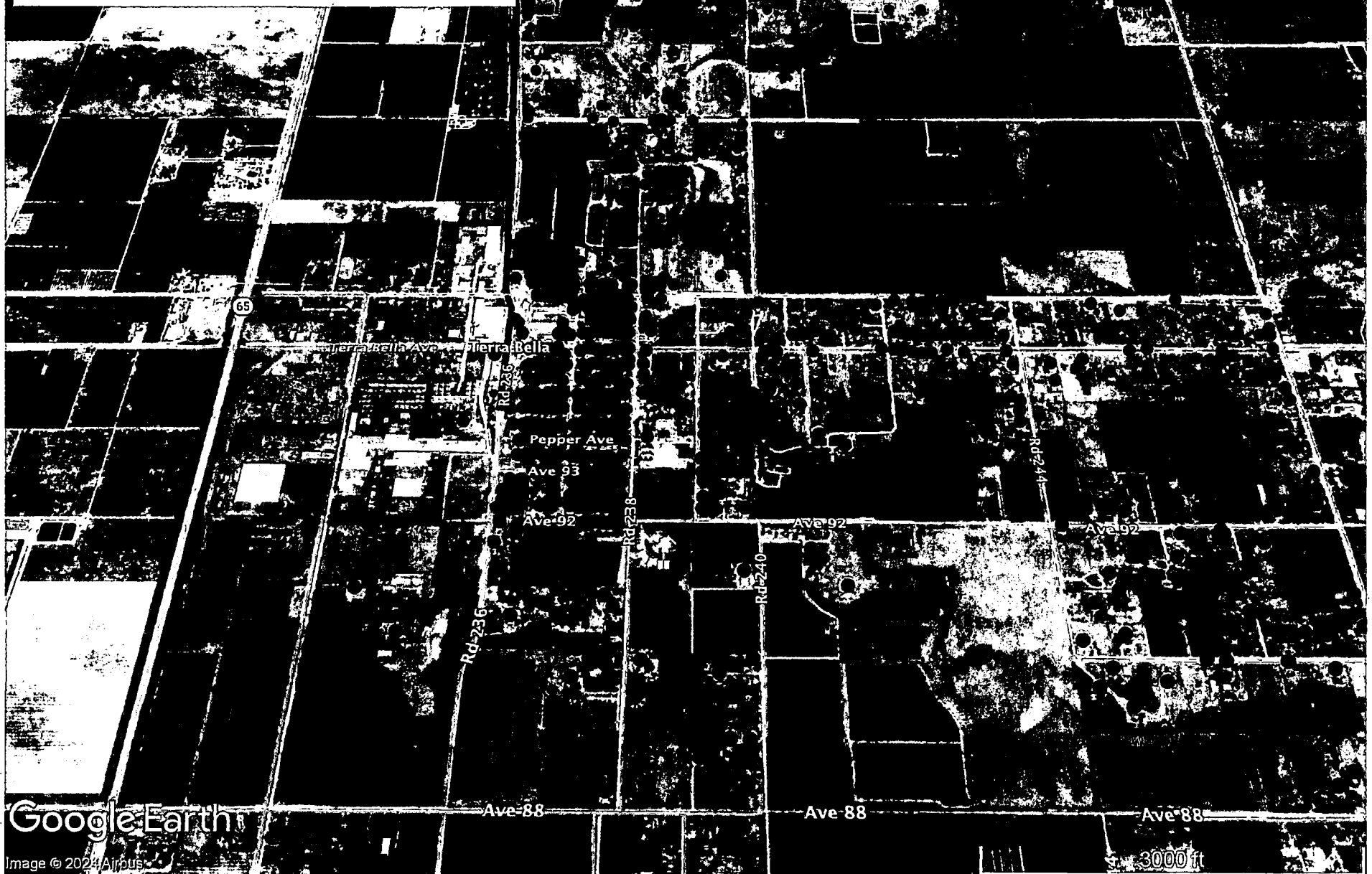
Terra Bella Fiber To The Home

VARCOMM Broadband Build Out Plan

YELLOW = Aerial Pole Attachment

GREEN = Buried Fiber Optics Rights Of Way

ORANGE = Middle Mile Upgrade



Google Earth

Image © 2024 Airbus

3000 ft

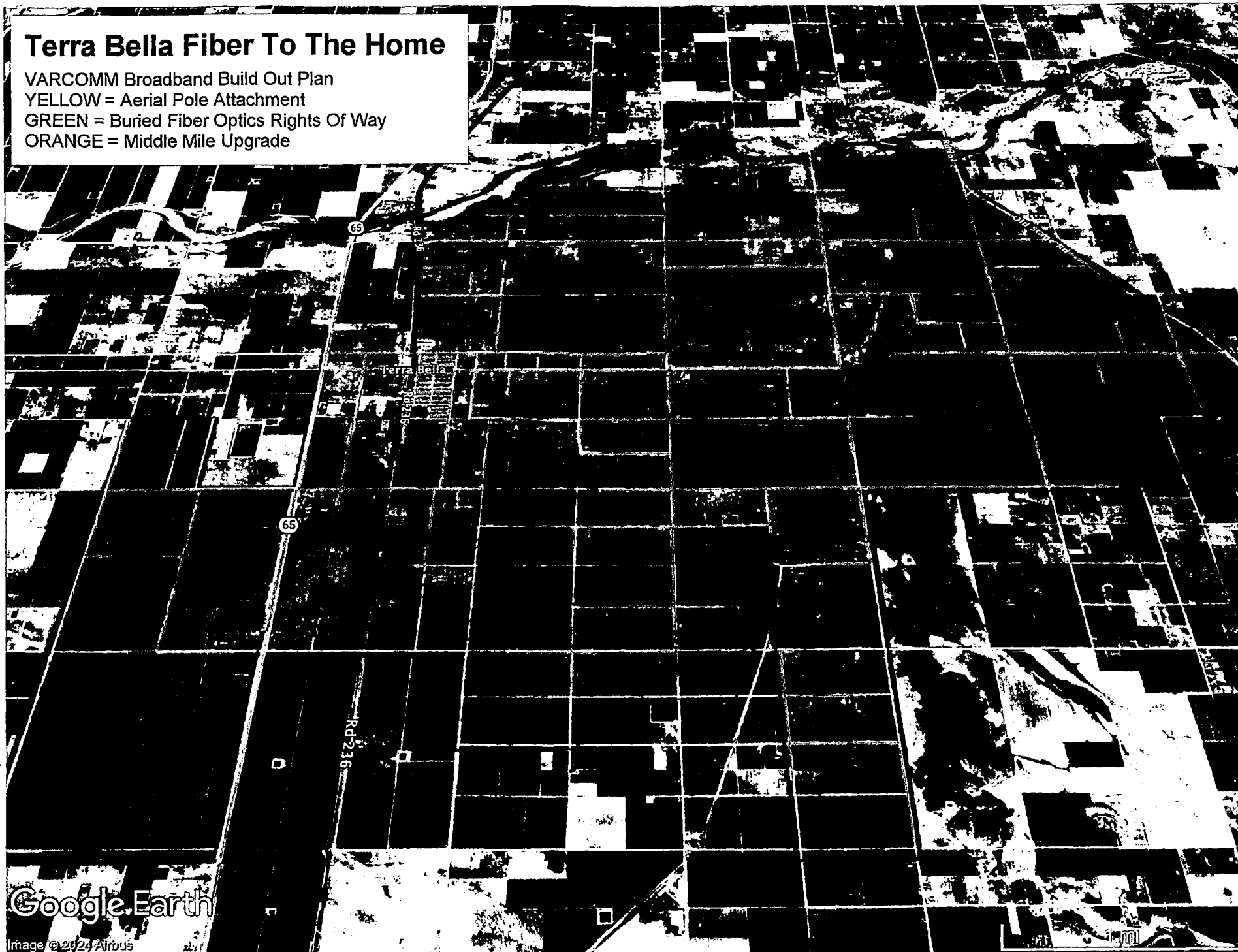
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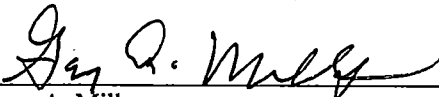
Image © 2024 Airbus


Reasons why the project is exempt: It is noted that utility stations and facilities regulated by the CPUC are generally exempt from local land use controls and local CEQA guidelines but are governed by the CEQA decisions of the CPUC when serving as Lead Agency. Tulare County finds this action to be consistent with Section 15303 Class 3, New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures (d), water main, sewage, electrical, gas, and other utility extensions, including street improvements, of reasonable length to serve such construction. The key consideration is whether the project involves negligible or no expansion of an existing use. In this instance, there is a lay down yard (AA PSP 24-078) located at the existing Ducor Telephone Company, which already serves the purpose of keeping equipment and materials, and these activities will included the addition of fiber optics broadband to several communities through minor modification of existing utility uses: 1) within County ROW, which is a transportation utility use governed by Tulare County itself as lead agency, and encroachment (permit) into its ROW is considered a ministerial act; 2) will assist SCE and the County support of expanding and protecting utility service along electrical utility lines throughout the area by increasing communications in more remote areas; 3) expansion of utility lines that already run through the area and are being expanded to provide more and better service; and, 4) the positive effect of these activities is that Tulare County itself is complying with the goals of the Last Mile Federal Funding Grant Program that is being administered by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC). Therefore, it can be reasonably concluded that proposed activity/project is exempt from review under CEQA and the State CEQA Guidelines as a utility extension pursuant to Class 3, 14 CCR §15303 (d).

Reed Schenke, P.E., RMA Director/Environmental Assessment Officer

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Tulare County

Project Planner/Representative: Denise England, Grants & Resource Manager **Telephone:** (559) 624-7035

Signature:  Date: 1/23/2025 Title: Chief Planner
Gary A. Mills Environmental Planning Division

Signature:  Date: 1.23.25 Title: Associate RMA Director, Designee
Michael Washam, ACE

Signed by Lead Agency

Date submitted to the LCI/SCH: _____

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

Fee Exempt per Government Code Section 6103

To: Office of Land Use & Climate Innovation
1400 Tenth Street, Room 121
Sacramento, CA 95814

Tulare County Clerk
Room 105, Courthouse
221 South Mooney Blvd.
Visalia, CA 93291

Lead Agency: County of Tulare c/o Resource Management Agency
5961 S. Mooney Blvd.
Visalia, CA 93277 (559) 624-7000
Attn: gmills@tularecountv.ca.gov and jvillis@tularecountv.ca.gov

Applicant(s): Tulare County Public Works
5961 S. Mooney Blvd.
Visalia, CA 93277 (559) 624-7000

Project Title: Terra Bella Fiber To The Home Project & Middle Mile Upgrade Project

Project Location - Specific: AA-PSP 24-078, references the source of construction as the lay down yard for this construction as Ducor Telephone Company located at 23477 Ducor Avenue, Ducor, CA 93218. The Terra Bella Fiber To The Home Project covers a large area in southern Tulare County. The Project's generally encompasses Avenue 72 to the south; the Tule River to the north; one (1) mile west of State Route 65 to the west (Road 224); and Old Stage Coach Road (M 109) to the east. The Middle Mile Upgrade Project starts in the south in the Community of Terra Bella and extends north to Avenue 146. Two aerial Project maps are attached to this NOE. One map shows where the fiber optic lines will be installed [aerial pole (yellow) or buried (green)] and the other map shows locations of the homes/businesses (red dots) that will be connected in the Terra Bella area of southern Tulare County. The AA-PSP 24-078 is for lay down yard.

Project Locations – Communities: Terra Bella, CA

Project Location - County: Tulare

Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project: The Terra Bella Fiber To The Home & Middle Mile Upgrade Projects involve installation of fiber optics broadband to 1,357 households (1,312 disadvantaged/underserved households), 92 businesses, two schools, one fire station and two health clinics in southern Tulare County. This Project will construct fiber optics broadband to several communities and will assist Tulare County in complying with the goals of the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC). According to VARCOMM, the Project does not propose to run along state roadways but instead will be utilizing existing utility poles and County roads that have existing conduit and along County right-of-way. VARCOMM has already secured a pole attachment agreement with SoCal Edison and have identified which poles they will attach to. VARCOMM also identified where they will place buried fiber optics in existing right-of-way. In addition, VARCOMM will comply with General Order 95 for pole loading requirements and will also obtain the necessary encroachment permit(s) from Tulare County.

The beneficiaries of the Projects will primarily be disadvantaged residents of Tulare County. VARCOMM will offer affordable, low-income plans (50Mbps/20 Mbps) starting as low as \$39.00 per month and will participate in California and Federal Lifeline programs so that they can also offer voice services. Lifeline voice services with ULTS and Lifeline equal \$7.40 per month and include 600 minutes of long distance and calling features. Non-Lifeline telephone service is \$25.00 per month and includes 600 minutes of long distance and calling features. VARCOMM has committed to maintaining its low-cost prices for at least 10 years.

Exempt Status: (check one)

- Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1); 15268);
- Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a));
- Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c));
- Common Sense Rule: CEQA guidelines 15061(b)(3)
- Categorical Exemption: CEQA Guidelines Class 3 Section 15303 New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures (d)**
- Statutory Exemptions: CEQA Guidelines Section 15262 Feasibility and Planning Studies

FILED TULARE COUNTY
JAN 23 2025
ASSESSOR / CLERK-RECORDER BY:
DATE RECEIVED FOR FILING AT TULARE COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE