

County of Lassen
ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

CHRIS GALLAGHER

District 1

GARY BRIDGES

District 2

TOM NEELY

District 3

AARON ALBAUGH

District 4

JASON INGRAM

District 5



Richard Egan

County Administrative Officer

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County Administration Office

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Susanville, CA 96130

Phone: 530-251-8333

Fax: 530-251-2663

February 13, 2024

TO: Board of Supervisors
Agenda Date: February 13, 2024

FROM: Richard Egan, County Administrative Officer
SUBJECT: Broadband Planning and Feasibility Study

TS for R.E.

RECOMMENDATION: Receive Information. The U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration, EDA does not require that formal action be taken by the Board of Supervisors. This is an informational item. The study is available at the county's website: Lassencounty.org

PRIOR BOARD ACTIONS: Since the mid-1990s, the Board of Supervisors has strongly supported efforts by various utilities to expand and improve fiber optic infrastructure, countywide. Most construction and service investments are being led by Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications who has sought out and obtained federal or state funding for such projects. Additionally, the County's membership and participation in the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC) and the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) advocate for meaningful state and federal policy for expanding broadband access and quality in Lassen County.

Additionally, since 1993, the County is a member of Golden State Finance Authority (a RCRC Affiliate) who sought out funding from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration to prepare the Broadband Planning and Feasibility Study (further discussed, below).

Recent passage of California Senate Bill 156 in July 2021, provided the Board of Supervisors with the opportunity for the County to join the Golden State Connect Authority (GSCA) (a RCRC affiliate) to partner with other counties for the purpose of obtaining infrastructure funding. In 2022, the Board authorized partnering with GSCA to secure a local technical assistance (LATA) grant of \$500,000 from the California Public Utilities Commission to identify and prioritize 'last mile' projects in unserved and underserved areas in Lassen County.

FISCAL IMPACT: The fiscal impact of this study is \$25,000 as appropriated and paid to GSFA in the 2022/2023 Fiscal Year Budget. This amount is pursuant a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) by and between GSFA and the County. The MOU obligated the County to provide \$25,000 towards the \$125,000 cost of the study. Lassen County's contribution is considered as mandatory matching funds in support of grant funding provided by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration, to GSFA to fully fund the study.

DISCUSSION:

From Golden State Connect Authority (GSCA):

With the unanimous passage of SB 156 by the California Legislature and formal signing of the Bill by the Governor in July 2021, not only was an historic \$6 billion in funding dedicated to broadband infrastructure across California set in motion, but for the first time in Statute, counties are allowed to own, operate, and maintain broadband infrastructure. Counties are now permitted to play a bigger role in a directing and developing this critical piece of community infrastructure.

To aid Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC) member counties in their new role as active participants in the conversations and future direction of broadband infrastructure development in their communities, the RCRC Board of Directors provided direction to staff to seek funding for the development of county broadband strategic plans. The intended benefit of the broadband strategic plan was to serve as a compendium of information about broadband systems – existing and future, broadband policies and programs, Smart Community applications, and other key areas, thus serving as a resource to RCRC member counties in this new role.

In September 2021, RCRC affiliate Golden State Finance Authority (GSFA) submitted a grant proposal to the US Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) for the purpose of requesting grant funding to complete countywide broadband strategic plans for those member counties that opted-in to the grant opportunity. Lassen County voted to participate in this opportunity and via execution of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Lassen County and Golden State Finance Authority, was included in the grant.

On August 23, 2022, GSFA was notified that the grant had been awarded. Included in the approved grant was funding for the completion of twenty-five countywide broadband strategic plans. Each countywide plan was approved for \$125,000, eighty percent (80%) of which would be funded by the EDA grant and twenty percent (20%) would be provided in the form of cash match. GSFA would serve as the grant administrator and contract manager on behalf of the member counties included in the grant.

In December 2022, a Request for Proposals (RFP) for Contract Services for the development of countywide broadband strategic plans was issued by GSFA. Lassen County had the opportunity to review the RFP prior to issuance and participate in the proposal review process. Eight proposals were submitted in response to the RFP. Upon review and rating, Tilson Technology was selected to be the consultant on the project.

The scope of work under the grant called for the following components in each countywide broadband strategic plan:

- Broadband Benefits – Discuss value that broadband contributes to:
 - Local Governments
 - Enhancement of Public Services - Efficiencies and Cost Reduction
 - Public Health and Safety
 - Economic Development
 - Addressing Community Needs
 - Digital Inclusion
- Needs Assessment – Current and Future
 - Government
 - Businesses
 - Residents
 - Current and Future Providers and Network Administrators
 - Education
 - Military Installations
- Analysis of Current Broadband Market and Infrastructure
 - Availability and Quality of Existing Broadband

- Identify providers and speeds – advertised and actual (if speed testing information is available)
 - Identify existing fiber locations by provider
- Conduct Business Broadband Survey
- Provide Gap Analysis on Findings
- Broadband Policies and Programs for Consideration – Federal and State
 - Fiber
 - Fixed Wireless/5G
 - Satellite
 - Hybrid (fixed wireless between towers connected to fiber)
- SMART Community Applications, including but not limited to:
 - Traffic Signalization & Safety
 - Wildfire Alert
 - Public Wi-Fi
 - Smart Parking & Wayfinding
 - ZEV Charging Infrastructure
 - SMART Community Policy Development
- Asset Inventory
 - Identification of Community Assets that Advance Broadband Deployment
 - Identification of Anchor Institutions
 - Development Policies Incorporating Broadband Deployment
 - Identification of Potential Partnership Opportunities That May Extend and/or Enhance Existing Infrastructure
- Recommendations & Next Steps
 - Among other recommendations, include recommendation of potential broadband deployment project areas, associated method of service delivery, and estimated costs. (Conducted in cooperation with development of network design for priority unserved/underserved areas made possible by CPUC Local Agency Technical Assistance grants for each county)
 - Provide strategy recommendations for deployment of county-owned assets and/or public-private partnerships dependent on county need.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT/PUBLIC INPUT:

Asking for agency, business and public involvement was invited using a variety of methods:

- Availability of the draft study for comment was promoted on the county's webpage from December 18, 2023 to January 22, 2024 (see attached notice).
- Approximately 50 businesses with a primary place of business in the unincorporated area of the county were invited to participate in a survey regarding broadband services; approximately 12-14 business completed the survey.
- The study was advertised on the County's website, Lassencounty.org.
- The notice requesting comments and questions was sent directly to various agencies, individuals, organizations; the result of asking for comments, information was provided by: the Susanville Indian Rancheria, Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications, health care providers, emergency medical services, information technology/education, electrical utilities, public safety, and county staff.

Survey responses and comments have been provided to Tilson Technologies. Tilson Technologies will respond to comments and/or incorporate survey information and comments into the study. A final study will be made available at a later date.

ALTERNATIVE: This item an informational item and therefore an alternative recommendation is not provided or relevant.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 18, 2023

Lassen County Draft Broadband Planning and Feasibility Study

The Lassen County Draft Broadband Planning and Feasibility Study is available for public comment. The study may be accessed from the County home page at www.lassencounty.org.

This study is being prepared for the community by Lassen County with the help of Golden State Finance Authority (GSFA) and the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC). Lassen County is a member of both organizations with a goal of supporting policy and infrastructure investments to improve high-speed broadband availability, countywide.

With the support of the Lassen County Board of Supervisors, Golden State Finance Authority was able to obtain a grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA), to fund the study to better understand how to improve high-speed broadband availability countywide. In addition to Lassen County, twenty-four other California counties are also receiving assistance from Golden State Finance Authority under the EDA grant.

The study includes technical investigations and analysis by Tilson Technologies. Tilson Technologies is assisting GSFA by investigating the telecommunications industry landscape in Lassen County, including locations of existing fiber optic cable and other assets, the service areas and service offerings – by technology – of retail internet service providers in the County. This includes work to identify locations lacking adequate broadband service and available funding for broadband infrastructure. Information in the study will help to support Lassen County's pursuit of improving high-speed services for *unserved* and *underserved* households and businesses. The term *unserved* generally means any location with access to service and speeds at or below 25 megabits per second download and 3 megabits per second upload, while the term *underserved* means any location without access to services of speeds at or above 100 megabits per second download and 20 megabits per second upload. According to the study, twenty-two percent of households, in Lassen County, are classified as unserved, and nine-percent are classified as underserved households. In total, approximately 3,881 households out of 12,216 total households, lack adequate broadband services from retail internet service providers.

The overall intent behind the development of the Lassen County Broadband Planning and Feasibility Study was to provide local leaders with information and ideas about broadband deployment – current and future – in their county so that local governments could become knowledgeable, active participants in ensuring that broadband is available to all residents.

Lassen County's role in the study is to make the document available for public comment and to compile those comments for response and/or incorporation into the study by GSFA and Tilson Technologies. The draft Lassen County Countywide Broadband Strategic Study is now available to the public for a 30- day review period in which the County will accept comments.

All comments should be directed to Lassen County Administrative Office by email to coadmin@co.lassen.ca.us and received by the county office no later than 5:00 P.M. Monday, January 22, 2024.

The study will be presented to the Lassen County Board of Supervisors in the Board Chambers, 707 Nevada Street, Susanville, CA, at its regular meeting on Tuesday, February 13, 2024, at approximately 10:30 A.M. or as soon as the item may be heard; proposed time and date of the presentation will be published as part of the Lassen County Board of Supervisors Agenda. If you wish to view the Lassen County Board of Supervisor agendas you may visit the County website at the following link: <https://lassen.legistar.com/calendar.aspx>

For Additional Information: Tony Shaw, Deputy County Administrative Officer at (530) 251-2736



County of Lassen
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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GARY BRIDGES

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May 18, 2021

Malinda Matson, Economic Development Representative
U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration
915 Second Avenue, Room 1890
Seattle, WA 98174

Dear Ms. Matson,

On behalf of the Lassen County Board of Supervisors, I am writing to convey Lassen County's support for the Golden State Finance Authority's Rural California Broadband Strategic Planning application to the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration under funding made possible by the American Rescue Plan Act.

The application outlines an important program of work that would establish "foundational readiness" for broadband investment and deployment across rural California. The proposed work would include the development of comprehensive broadband strategic plans for many of the rural counties in the state, Lassen County among them, that do not currently have such plans.

Preparing for and expanding existing and new opportunities is a goal of Lassen County's Comprehensive Economic Strategy (CEDS). High-speed, ubiquitous broadband availability in rural California is often a critical missing component of infrastructure that is needed to support those opportunities. A high-speed data connection is vital to allow a business to function efficiently. The lack of connectivity could also be the limiting factor for retaining, attracting new and growing commerce and trade.

The development of broadband strategic plans for rural California counties will provide important benefits, including: First, it will allow communities to strategically expand broadband investment into unserved and under-served areas where it is needed most; second, it will provide the information needed to communicate and support effective decision making; and third, it will open the door for rural communities apply for federal or other funding opportunities to expand broadband that require (or strongly encourage) a current broadband strategic plan.

Lassen County is one of the counties that will benefit from the work proposed in Golden State Finance Authority's grant application. As such, we strongly support this application and request that you give it your highest level of consideration.

Sincerely,

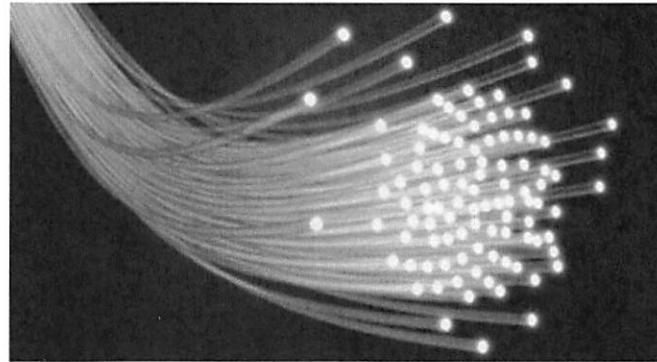
Aaron Albaugh
AARON ALBAUGH, Chairman
Lassen County Board of Supervisors

CC: Congressman Doug LaMalfa

Provided by a grant from the
US Department of Commerce

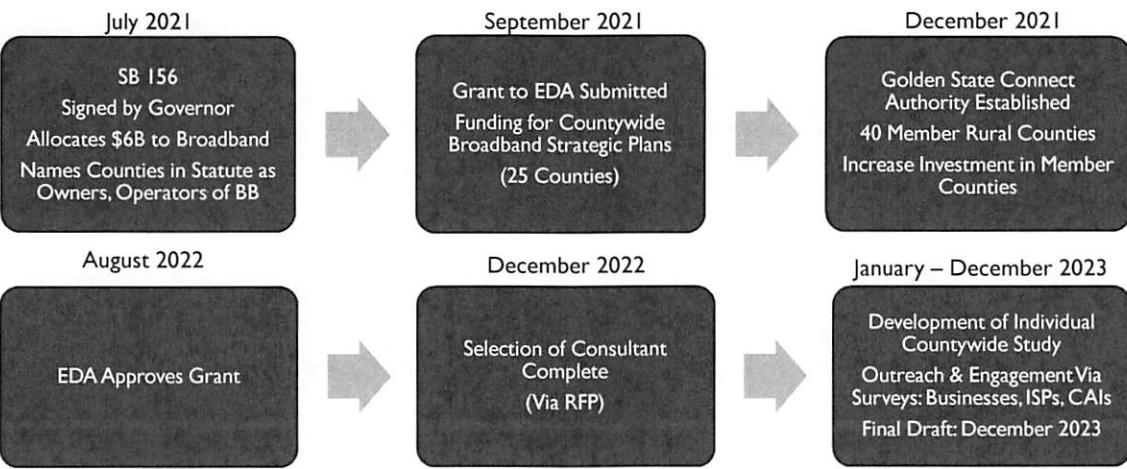


Grant Administration & Contract Management
Provided By



Lassen County Broadband Planning and Feasibility Study

**PURPOSE OF STUDY: PROVIDE A COMPENDIUM OF INFORMATION THAT LOCAL
GOVERNMENT LEADERS NEED TO ACTIVELY ENGAGE IN BROADBAND
CONVERSATIONS WITHIN THEIR COMMUNITIES**



BROADBAND PLANNING & FEASIBILITY STUDY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Industry Overview, Broadband Benefits and Challenges
- Current and Future Needs Assessments
- Analysis of Current Broadband Market and Expansion Strategies
- Asset Inventory and Gap Analysis
- Broadband Funding Strategies
- Fostering a Healthy Broadband Deployment Environment
- Digital Inclusion Considerations and Strategies
- Smart Community Applications
- Recommendations and Next Steps

Internet Speed	Number of Users	Type of Activity
5-20 Mbps	1-2 Users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emails • Regular website browsing • Music streaming • SD video streaming
20-40 Mbps	1-3 Users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working from home using light apps • Streaming music • Online gaming • 4K video streaming • HD video streaming
40-100 Mbps	2-4 Users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multigaming • 4K video streaming • Using home security • Using smart appliances • Downloading large files
100-500 Mbps	2-5 Users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Running a home office • Using creative apps or software • 4K video streaming • UHD streaming on multiple screens • Fast file download of large files
500-1,000 Mbps	5 Users or more	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Running a home office • Using creative apps or software • 4K video streaming • Using home security • Using smart home devices • Multiuser/ multi-device functions

BROADBAND CAPACITY - RESIDENTIAL

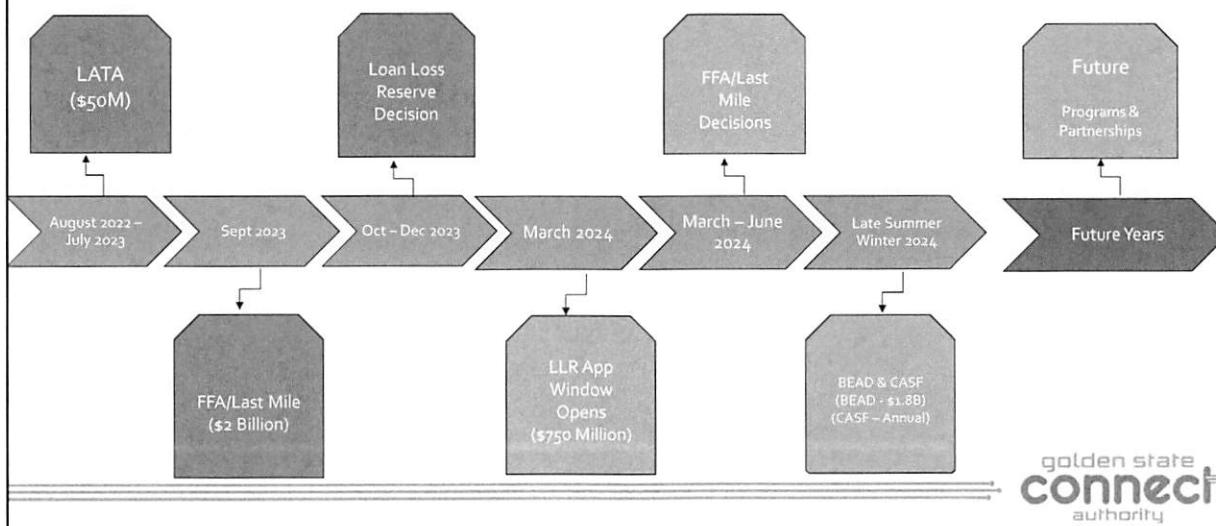
LASSEN COUNTY 2,762 HOUSEHOLDS (22.6 PERCENT) UNSERVED, LACKING 25/3 MBPS SERVICE 1,119 HOUSEHOLDS (9.2 PERCENT) UNDERSERVED, LACKING 100/20 MBPS, BUT NOT 25/3 MBPS SERVICE	
BENEFITS	CHALLENGES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Economic Development ■ Remote Work ■ Public Safety ■ Local Government Functions ■ Civic Engagement ■ Smart Transportation Applications ■ Natural Resource Management ■ Utility Operational Efficiency ■ Healthcare 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Physical Barriers ■ Geography ■ Geology ■ MM Access ■ Remote Life-Style Choice ■ Social and Economic Barriers ■ Affordability for Users ■ Digital Literacy ■ System Economics

Households (HHs) – 12,216 Total	25/3 Mbps	100/20 Mbps	250/25 Mbps
HHs served by any wireline or fixed wireless	77.4% (9,454)	68.2% (8,335)	59.6% (7,281)
HHs served by any wireline	59.8% (7,303)	59.7% (7,292)	59.6% (7,281)
HHs served by only fixed wireless at speed	17.6% (2,151)	8.5% (1,043)	0%
Wireline Technologies:			
➤ High-speed option (Fiber and/or Cable)	59.7% (7,294)	59.7% (7,288)	59.6% (7,281)
➤ DSL	2.2% (269)	0.0% (4)	0%
Fixed Wireless Technologies:			
➤ Fixed wireless	71.5% (8,733)	54.9% (6,711)	0%
➤ Only fixed wireless at speed	17.6% (2,151)	8.5% (1,043)	0%
HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVING EACH LEVEL OF SERVICE ACROSS LASSEN COUNTY			

LEVELS OF BROADBAND SERVICE AVAILABILITY IN LASSEN COUNTY

- ⦿ **Poor high-speed broadband availability:** A reported 59.6 percent of households can receive high-speed broadband service from cable, and fiber is only offered to a few households across the County. This level of availability is low compared to the rest of California and the nation, and the one existing high-speed broadband provider, Zito Media, should be strongly encouraged to expand services beyond its current service areas.
- ⦿ **High dependence on fixed wireless:** An estimated 17.6 percent of locations can only receive basic broadband service via fixed wireless technologies, while 8.5 percent depend upon it for access to 100/20 Mbps services. This connectivity has been vital for these households, but in the long term, many of these locations should remain a priority to receive high-speed wireline services.
- ⦿ **Available DSL is often inadequate:** A reported 24.6 percent of households have access to some form of DSL, but only 2.2 percent of households receive DSL service offering at least 25/3 Mbps, the minimum speed requirements to be considered broadband. ISPs providing inadequate DSL service may not have an incentive to upgrade these networks if the projected return on investment does not meet internal revenue standards. However, if provided financial support, these providers may be best positioned to deploy fiber through their DSL service areas using existing access to telephone poles and rights-of-way to install fiber at a lower cost than competitors.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR SYSTEM EXPANSION 2023-2024 (Large One-Time) FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES



CPUC FFA LAST MILE APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED FOR PROJECTS IN LASSEN COUNTY

Organization	Project Name	Amount Requested	Unserved Locations
GSCA	GSCA City of Susanville Broadband Network	\$6,766,665	149
GSCA	GSCA Lassen County Broadband Network	\$16,774,260	527
Plumas-Sierra Telecom.	PST Doyle-Herlong	\$7,156,583	409
Plumas-Sierra Telecom.	PST Janesville-Milford	\$8,101,046	244

OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPAND QUALITY BROADBAND TO ENSURE ACCESS FOR ALL

- Best In Class - Empower a Broadband Position to Execute County Strategies
- Identify Priority Areas and Determine Best Technology for Serving
 - Fiber, Fixed Wireless, or Other
- Actively Engage With ISPs and Golden State Connect Authority (GSCA)
 - Pick Quality Options - Not Favorites
 - GSCA and Your CPUC Regional Consortium Can Help
- Foster a Healthy Broadband Deployment Environment
 - Permitting, Coordination, Other Local Policies
- Identify and Engage In Digital Inclusion
 - Promote Digital Equity Programs, Encourage Participation, Make Community Assets Available
- Employ Smart Community Applications
 - Community WiFi, Street Light Control, Early Fire Warning, Air Quality Monitoring

GOLDEN STATE CONNECT AUTHORITY



- Formed Joint Powers Authority
 - Increase access to reliable, affordable, high-speed broadband for all rural Californians
 - 40 Member Counties
- Program of Work Includes:
 - Broadband Strategic Planning
 - Capacity Building, Information Sharing
 - Open Access Municipal Broadband Deployment

