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Nevada County News

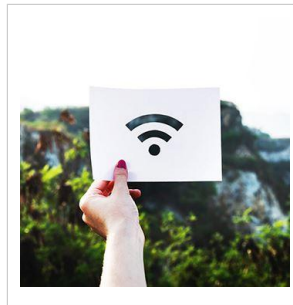
Posted on: October 15, 2021

Supervisors Approve Countywide EIR to Expedite Shovel-Ready Broadband Projects

On Tuesday, October 12th, the Nevada County Board of Supervisors unanimously approved a contract to conduct a Countywide Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to meaningfully increase the viability of universal and accessible broadband throughout Nevada County.

“This will put Nevada County in the position to have shovel-ready projects, putting us first in line for competitive state and federal broadband dollars,” said Board Chair Dan Miller.

Broadband became a standalone [Board Objective](#) in 2021, seeing the benefits broadband will bring to support economic development, distance-learning, telework, telemedicine, and general quality of life in Nevada County.



“Simply put, this is the next step in getting fast, reliable internet into every home and business in Nevada County,” added Supervisor Heidi Hall, who has been a champion for broadband and serves on the California State Association of Counties Broadband Task Force.

Countywide Broadband EIR

The County’s programmatic EIR will address the environmental effects of broadband installation, including both underground and aerial fiberoptic cable, countywide. The objective is to achieve compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in advance such that individual companies can take advantage of funding expected from the state and federal government.

This innovative approach to streamlining new broadband projects to be shovel-ready is being hailed by statewide leaders.

“The Nevada County Board of Supervisors is a champion for broadband access. By approving this Countywide Programmatic Environmental Impact Report, the Board will expedite deployment of ubiquitous broadband infrastructure to enhance public safety, economic prosperity, and environmental protection,” said Sunne Wright McPeak, President and CEO of the [California Emerging Technology Fund](#) (CETF).

CETF, a statewide non-profit foundation whose mission is to close the Digital Divide, recently granted \$50,000 to support the County’s programmatic EIR. The Board allocated an additional \$226,000 from the PG&E settlement fund.

Nevada County Broadband Strategy

The Board of Supervisors adopted [Nevada County’s Broadband Strategy](#) in October 2019. The plan was developed in partnership with [Sierra Business Council](#), focusing on impactful strategies that prioritize actions within the County’s control, specifically local policy and planning, local funding mechanisms, and partnerships that will advance broadband coverage within Nevada County.

In 2019, Supervisors established the Last Mile Grant Program, focusing on completing broadband connections from existing provider infrastructure to residents’ homes. National Association of Counties (NACo) recognized the program in July 2021 with an Achievement Award as an innovative, effective county government program. The program is funded with Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) dollars generated from tourism and used for economic development initiatives. To date, the Last Mile Grant Program has awarded over \$675,000 grant dollars in two grant cycles.

Tools

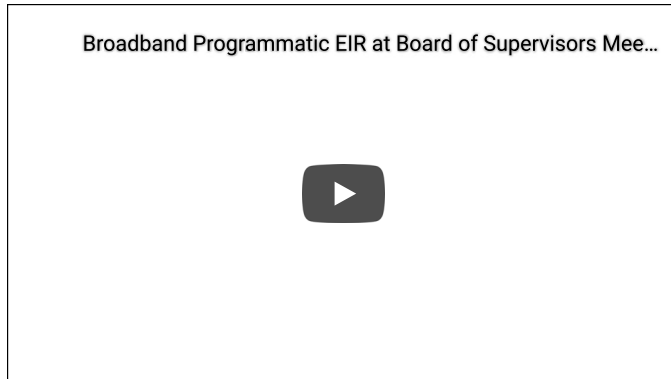
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Strategic broadband policy and planning, such as the County's programmatic EIR, set Nevada County apart from other rural counties for new funding opportunities and position Nevada County to advance broadband connectivity for economic development, job creation, and bridging the digital divide.



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