Resolution for SCAG to Bridge the Digital Divide in Underserved Communities

Southern California Association of Governments

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Pre-COVID Conditions

- As of December 2018, 23 percent of California’s housing units (8.4 million residents) lack broadband service entirely
- 2,000,000 Californians have broadband/internet service but not “high-speed”
- Within the SCAG region, 650,000 (10 percent) of households do not have access to adequate internet speeds or no internet access
- Households are disproportionately located in low-income and rural areas:
  - Black
  - Latino
  - Senior Citizens
Barriers to adoption

- Expensive – subscriptions range from 50 to over a 100 a month
- Lack of digital skills or distrust in new technology
- Physical infrastructural gaps

COVID-19 and the Digital Divide

- 124,000 schools within the U.S have closed, affecting 55 million students
- 10 percent of households in SCAG region lack broadband
  - Students in underserved communities cannot compete
- Divide is apparent in telework, telemedicine, food delivery, e-commerce and entertainment
Response from the State

• Governor Newsom signed Executive Order N-73-20
• SCAG, SANDAG and stakeholders convened a working group to assist in bridging the digital divide
• Working group drafted a sample resolution and policy paper for local jurisdictions to adopt

Resolution and Policy Paper for Local Jurisdictions

• Key items include but are not limited to:
  • Collaboration between stakeholders
  • Request for grant funding
  • Adopt policies to expedite permitting, lowering fees and emergency ordinances
• To date, three of the six counties (Los Angeles, San Bernardino and Riverside County) have adopted a resolution
SCAG’s Resolution to Bridge the Digital Divide

- Allows SCAG to develop its own Broadband Action Plan
- Key items include but are not limited to:
  - Pursue grant opportunities to assist local jurisdictions
  - Convene an official working group
  - Inclusive Regional Economic Recovery and Strategy
  - Incorporate findings to our programs and 2024 RTP/SCS
- The resolution would support SCAG’s commitment to equity and social justice

Thank You

Please feel free to send additional questions to Roland Ok at: Ok@scag.ca.gov