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03/04/2022

**TO: The Honorable Mayor Eric Garcetti
The Honorable Members of the Los Angeles City Council**

CC: The Connectivity and Digital Inclusion Working Group

% Michael Espinosa, Office of the City Clerk

**COUNCIL FILE 21-0600-S46: STATUS OF BROADBAND CO-LOCATION
DEPLOYMENTS AND EFFORTS TO BRIDGE THE DIGITAL DIVIDE**

**REPORT: CONNECTIVITY AND DIGITAL INCLUSION UPDATE AND PROPOSAL
FOR UNIVERSAL BROADBAND SERVICES IN DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES**

SUMMARY

The Digital Divide -- the gap between those that have opportunities to access and benefit from the internet and those that do not -- has been identified by the City as a significant issue impacting its residents. On October 12th, 2021, the Council and Mayor approved the \$5M Digital Inclusion spending plan identified in the Bureau of Street Lighting's (BSL) September 9 report titled "Status of Broadband Co-Location Deployments and Efforts to Bridge the Digital Divide" and directed the Bureau, working with the Connectivity and Digital Inclusion Working Group, to develop a spending plan for the \$10M Universal Broadband Services line item in the Unappropriated Balance (UB), which was intended to be used for "universal broadband services in disadvantaged communities."

This report first provides an overview and assessment of the many changes that have occurred at the Local, State, and Federal levels of government since last October, as well as a summary of the lessons learned from two years of urgent public efforts to bridge the digital divide. Informed by this analysis, this report then proposes, for the consideration of the Council and Mayor, a spending plan for the \$10M in the UB that balances the objectives of meeting immediate community needs and preparing the City of Los Angeles to take a more active role in broadband infrastructure creation and provision. Specifically, this report proposes transferring the \$10M in the Unappropriated Balance to BSL's Digital Equity Fund (or to the Digital Inclusion CTIEP account if the Digital Equity fund has not been created), to be used for the following activities:

- **Community Connectivity Pilots (\$6M):** Three or more place-based projects to increase broadband adoption in specific disadvantaged communities, building on BSL's in-process \$2.1M CDBG-funded connectivity pilot. Funding will be used for communications infrastructure buildout and/or proactive connectivity services and engagement efforts, depending on the site conditions, the presence of facilities and assets that could be leveraged, and the potential for coordination with other partners.
- **City-Wide Broadband Adoption Efforts (\$1.25M):** Expansion of outreach, engagement, training, loan programs, and other efforts to help connect disconnected Los Angeles residents with existing programs for low- or no-cost internet service and devices, including through the federal government's Affordable Connectivity Program.
- **Backbone Infrastructure Installation Pilots (\$2M):** Pilot investments in "dark" fiber (not "lit" with information transmission), conduit, and/or other facilitative backbone infrastructure investments to be coordinated with the activities of other local, state, and regional jurisdictions to support a broader publicly-owned and/or -operated open-access fiber network strategy.
- **Strategic Technical Assistance and Program Support (\$750K):** Procurement of expert consultation and technical support including contracted staff support for network design, cross-agency infrastructure project management, and other technical assistance where the Bureau and/or the City do not have sufficient subject-area capacity. These resources will also be used to conduct analysis of City assets and infrastructure and produce a strategy to deploy these assets in support of a coordinated multi-partner effort to sustainably bridge the digital divide in Los Angeles.

Lastly, this report provides a status update on the Digital Inclusion spending plan approved by the Council in October 2021.

BACKGROUND: RELEVANT RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Since October 2021, there have been a number of major developments and announcements that are relevant to the future of equitable connectivity in Los Angeles. In order for the City to see the greatest benefit from these developments, we must begin now to build technical expertise and capacity to a) be competitive for directly pursuing new grants dollars where appropriate, b) advocate for new programs and resources to benefit Angelenos, c) coordinate the use and deployment of our assets and authorities to create synergies with other efforts, and d) connect Angelenos to new opportunities as they become available.

Infrastructure and Jobs Act (IIJA)

In November, Congress passed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). While Los Angeles is not eligible for the majority of funding that has been proposed for broadband investments,¹ BSL has identified \$3.15B in digital-equity related grant

¹ The \$42B "Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment" grant program is designed to bring basic infrastructure to rural areas. States will have to first show that they've completely addressed communities that are wholly unserved and underserved by broadband infrastructure first before allocating funding to

opportunities within the Act that the City is either directly eligible to apply for or could benefit from via the State's enactment of a Digital Equity Plan (which must include local coordination and programming). These grant opportunities will include capital funding for middle-mile fiber and other infrastructure investments as well as flexible funding that could be used for a wide range of broadband adoption efforts. BSL's proposal for the Universal Broadband Services work program is designed to help identify and build capacity within the City to be competitive for these grant dollars, with the goal of ensuring that these dollars directly benefit Los Angeles communities.

Possibly even more significant than the IIJA's grant opportunities is the bill's "permanent extension" of the Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) program, in the form of the \$30/month Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). This program, if appropriately promoted and supported with local efforts, could connect tens of thousands of Los Angeles households to high-quality fixed-network internet. Concentrated outreach and engagement will be critical, however, to make the most of this resource. As the next section details, recent research has highlighted how the lack of sufficient complementary engagement activities hampered the effectiveness of the EBB program.

SB156 and I-110 Corridor Middle-Mile Project

Also in November 2021, the State announced the first 18 public open-access² middle-mile³ projects to be undertaken as part of the State's \$6 billion investment in California's broadband infrastructure through SB 156. Included in these initial projects is the I-110 corridor through South Los Angeles – a corridor that had not been included in earlier state proposals for middle-mile investments. As steering committee members of the Los Angeles Digital Equity Action League (LA DEAL), Deputy Mayor for Budget and Innovation Jeanne Holm and Bureau of Street Lighting Executive Director Miguel Sangalang joined others throughout the County in successfully advocating via the CPUC comment process for the inclusion of South Los Angeles in the State's plans.

While the timeframe and details for this middle-mile project have not been determined, this announcement demonstrates the State's commitment to supporting affordable and open-access middle-mile infrastructure in some of our most disconnected communities. The State's efforts, if aligned and coordinated with existing and new fiber infrastructure built and owned by local jurisdictions (including the City/DWP, LAUSD, Metro, and the County), could create a regional foundation for equitable internet service provision. Additionally, with the State's creation of GoldenStateNet, a subsidiary of the Corporation for Education Network Initiatives in California (CENIC), as a central agency to manage

urban communities like those in the City Los Angeles, which are fully served by infrastructure but have large disconnected populations due to affordability and other access barriers (almost every inhabited block of Los Angeles does not fit either federal definition of "unserved" or "underserved").

² Open access means the network permits any broadband provider to connect to the network on nondiscriminatory terms and conditions.

³ Middle-mile infrastructure refers to the backbone fiber optic links between the long haul regional "hubs" of the internet and the "last mile" connections that provide service to residents and businesses. As middle-mile fiber networks are costly to build, they are a key cost driver in the provision of internet service to users.

and guide these investments and connections, there now exists a convening and coordinating body to bring together California's disconnected and siloed public fiber networks for the purposes of more equitable internet service for the public.

New County Efforts / City / County MOUs

Also in November 2021 (at a regular meeting on November 16, 2021), the County Board of Supervisors designated the Internal Services Department (ISD) as the County's lead Department responsible for "ensuring the County's efforts on all community broadband infrastructure and residential service initiatives to close the Digital Divide," and authorized ISD to undertake the following projects and programs:

- \$37.9M Community Wireless Pilot: undertake a five year proof-of-concept model for a Community Wireless Network, which will utilize public-private partnerships and a Managed Service Provider (MSP) for the deployment of network of Citizen Broadband Radio Service (CBRS) and/or millimeter wave technologies to deliver reliable high-speed internet service to 12,500 households in digital divide target areas.
- Public Access to County Broadband Agreements: negotiate with internet service providers and telecommunication companies and explore executing new agreements to make those services available to the public.
- Countywide Subsidy Awareness Campaign: enact and coordinate a promotional campaign with County partners and jurisdictions on subsidy programs to encourage participation, with outreach to be conducted in the County's multiple threshold languages (note: ISD has expanded on this scope to include a Digital Navigator program to provide direct support to households to sign onto subsidy programs).
- Feasibility Study for Municipal Broadband: In the same meeting, the Board of Supervisors also authorized the County's Chief Executive Office to hire a consultant to conduct a financial and technical feasibility study for a County-administered municipal broadband service, which would consider the utilization of public and private fiber and wireless network infrastructure.

These County efforts represent significant opportunities for collaboration and coordination between the City and the County to more substantially achieve our shared universal broadband adoption goals and to prevent duplication of efforts. In regular conversations with ISD, BSL has learned that their analysis of the key geographic areas for focus (areas with the most prominent digital inequities) closely mirrors our own analysis, including highlighting communities in Southeast Los Angeles and the Eastside that straddle the border between the City and unincorporated County neighborhoods. BSL has already signed an MOU with ISD to ensure coordination and collaboration between our jurisdictions around connectivity projects and programs, and we are currently jointly pursuing a stronger agreement that would set up a formal partnership to deploy our respective assets, investments, and organizational competitive advantages in concert toward shared projects.

The County is currently in the process of an in-depth analysis (via consultant) of their assets and operational capabilities that could be deployed for public connectivity projects.

In our proposal for the Universal Broadband Services program, BSL recommends that the City also conduct a similar analysis in conjunction with the County and other partners, which would require consultant support.

CDBG-Funded First Community Connectivity Pilot

As mentioned in the previous report on this Council File, dated September 9, 2021, the City has allocated \$2.1M in 2021-22 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding to the Bureau for the buildout of community connectivity infrastructure within a pilot area. Since then, the Bureau has made significant progress on developing the scope for this project and aims to put the project out for solicitation soon. This project will build out a network of high-capacity connections to BSL street poles, along with community broadcast equipment, within a roughly half-square-mile densely populated neighborhood in southern Boyle Heights. BSL is currently exploring a partnership model to operate a no- or low-cost on this network (to potentially be subsidized by programs such as the Affordable Connectivity Program), including a direct partnership and/or coordination with Los Angeles County's efforts noted above as well as other local and regional jurisdictions and entities. Although this project was conceived prior to the Bureau's proposals outlined later in this report, it is aligned with the overall strategic infrastructure-focused approach that the Bureau is proposing to follow. In this way, the project will serve as a "pilot of pilots."

BACKGROUND: ANALYSIS OF KEY PUBLIC SECTOR EFFORTS

We are two years into the Covid-19 pandemic and the public sector's response, which has included unprecedented efforts to rapidly bridge the digital divide. In the process of designing our proposal for the Universal Broadband Services program, BSL has endeavored to review some of the most prominent approaches from these past two years to learn from their successes and challenges. This section provides an overview of the "lessons learned" which have informed our proposal.

Subsidy Programs Require Concentrated Engagement for Success

In May 2021, the federal government launched the Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) program which offered a subsidy of up to \$50 per month to qualifying low-income households to pay for broadband service, as well as a one-time discount of up to \$100 for the purchase of a device. In November, with the passage of the IIJA, the EBB program ended but the benefit (at a lower rate of \$30/month) and one-time device discount was extended indefinitely. Since the launch of the EBB, a USC research team led by Dr. Hernan Galperin has been studying the program to identify successes and challenges that could inform current and future efforts. In January 2022, this team issued a report titled "A Roadmap for Affordable Broadband: Lessons from the Emergency Broadband Benefit." This report identified some key challenges associated with the EBB program that limited its impact on disconnected households. BSL has summarized them below:

- **Low Participation Rate:** USC estimated the participation rate for the EBB program at around 20% of all eligible households nationally, with California at about 22%. While better than the estimated participation in previous communications subsidy programs such as Lifeline, this rate is significantly below participation in other safety net programs such as SNAP and Medicaid (about 80% participation).

Important for Los Angeles, the report identified especially low participation rates among older adults and within communities with a large share of foreign-born residents

- Majority Used for Mobile Broadband: Two thirds of EBB recipients used the subsidy to pay for mobile broadband (mostly cellphone service). The report notes that this “raises concerns about the ability of EBB (and now ACP) recipients to fully take advantage of telehealth, remote work and online learning applications, which often exceed the data transmission capacity of mobile networks and the capabilities of mobile devices.”
- Primarily Served Already-Connected Households: Contrary to the purposes of the program, the report found EBB participation rates across counties to be, at best, uncorrelated with the pre-pandemic share of households without internet – with some models suggesting an inverse relationship. This finding suggests that the program “primarily alleviat[ed] the cost burden for eligible households that were already connected to broadband in 2019, with only modest impact in bringing those previously unconnected online.”

What this research illustrates is that subsidy programs alone are not sufficient to increase broadband connectivity rates, and must be paired with targeted, concentrated, and tailored outreach. The report suggests channeling outreach efforts through organizations with strong local community ties, and suggesting that these organizations play a key role by offering technical support for onboarding those with limited digital literacy (as with the County’s forthcoming Digital Navigator program). Additionally, the report suggests leveraging enrollment in other high-participation social programs such as SNAP and WIC to engage potentially-eligible households.

A local success story for tying together subsidy programs and concentrated outreach is the ongoing HACLA partnership with internet service provider (ISP) Starry Internet to bring low-cost, high-speed, and high-reliability broadband to residents of HACLA communities. The ISP, in partnership with HACLA, has conducted extensive engagement with community residents to improve awareness of their low-cost service and to directly assist residents with enrollment in subsidies via ACP. In one year of concerted efforts, this partnership has reached an impressive 64% uptake among households in the Nickerson Gardens community.

Wireless Solutions Are Insufficient without Enhanced Infrastructure

In response to County public health rules instituted in March 2020, LAUSD rapidly transitioned to a remote learning structure. To support students who lacked internet access, the district partnered with telecommunications carriers on a nation-leading deployment of pre-paid mobile internet devices or “hotspots,” distributing hundreds of thousands of devices within two months and reaching 400,000 devices by December 2020 (these hotspots use mobile data (LTE) to provide a WiFi signal that connects the users to the internet). Mobile hotspots have the benefit of requiring no new physical connections in the home and no extensive application forms, which means that they can be rapidly deployed with minimal adoption barriers. This program was successful in

rapidly connecting large numbers of students to enable the district's shift to remote learning.

However, this program has also proven that the hotspot approach is insufficient to provide reliable high-speed connectivity for *all* students – with a significant minority of students remaining poorly connected. In March 2021, LAUSD began collecting speed data from student connections to evaluate the state of connectivity. In a report to the LAUSD Board of Education in May 2021⁴, the District's Information Technology Division and Office of Government Relations reported that 23.9% of student connections tested were below the FCC minimum standard download speed of 25 Mbps. 4.7% of the connections were termed "Far Below Standard," with download speeds under 5 Mbps. These numbers demonstrate the current quality and consistency of internet connectivity that mobile networks can provide across a large city like Los Angeles. And while the private sector deployment of 5G shows the promise of broadband-level connectivity on mobile networks, the coverage necessary to ensure equitable access for all communities is a number of years away under best-case projections.

During the pandemic, a number of American cities, counties and school districts have focused on building their own new wireless infrastructure (including WiFi, Citizens Broadband Radio Service, and Millimeter Wave technologies) as the foundation for providing disconnected households within specific target areas with sustainable and consistent high-speed broadband access. The most prominent is New York City: in October, the City announced a \$157 million plan to build publicly owned, open-access broadband infrastructure to provide service for up to 1.6 million New Yorkers by 2024. This approach relies on an ecosystem of socially-minded ISPs that will provide affordable high-speed internet service on the public infrastructure. New York City is already well ahead of the nation in fostering such an ecosystem, having deployed a similar effort based around its public housing sites. Today, there are dozens of small and community-based local ISPs operating in New York City that are poised to deliver affordable internet on the City's new infrastructure. As noted earlier in this report, the County of Los Angeles is also undertaking a wireless infrastructure approach – though the County will contract with a managed service provider to provide internet service provision.

Note: Although 90% of LAUSD students 12 and older have been vaccinated (per a Los Angeles Times article dated February 9, 2022), LAUSD anticipates that thousands of students will still not be vaccinated by this Fall and will therefore be unable to resume in-person education. In response, the LAUSD Board of Education recently took the first steps toward establishing a long-term remote learning program, which could include creating as many as six new online schools that could enroll up to 15,000 students. This will likely require significant investment from the district and coordination with other regional efforts and jurisdictions. It is important that the City coordinate with this effort, and BSL is working toward an MOU with the district to establish terms for collaboration on related projects and programs.

⁴ <http://laschoolboard.org/sites/default/files/05-04-21SpclBdDigitalDivideUpdatePresentation.pdf>

Emerging P3 Models Are Promising – But Too Early to Assess

In recent years, a number of municipalities throughout the country have entered into agreements with private companies to encourage comprehensive fiber investment within their cities that goes well beyond the traditional middle mile. In these partnerships, the municipality agrees to expedite permitting for the private fiber network buildout, and in exchange the private partner agrees to make an effort to lay fiber on, essentially, all public streets that have residences or businesses. The benefit of comprehensive fiber coverage is that high-capacity “last-mile” connections can be made to homes or businesses with minimized expense and time – in essence, the “last-mile” becomes the “last 20 feet.” This can create new opportunities for more equitable internet provision, including by smaller or non-traditional ISPs that lack the capacity to build fiber infrastructure.

One example of this type of partnership is that offered by SiFi Networks under the “FiberCities” brand name. Under FiberCities agreements, SiFi maintains ownership of the networks and provides use of the networks via lease to third-party service providers. SiFi commits to using “commercially reasonable efforts⁵” to lay fiber on all public streets within the municipal partner’s boundaries.

While these types of agreements can be an effective way to encourage “open access-lite” fiber infrastructure networks, they depend on contractual terms that most often do not require that investments will be made first in areas that are in the greatest need and cannot guarantee that these areas will be covered at all (under “commercially reasonable” terms). Given forthcoming Federal and State resources and ample opportunities for partnerships with other public jurisdictions, the Bureau recommends that the City take what is best about this type of approach – an infrastructure-first focus that minimizes the distance and expense of the last mile – and apply it to a model that is planned, owned, and operated by the public sector. In this way, the City can ensure that our most-disconnected communities receive infrastructure investment now and equitable, sustainable, high-capacity service as soon as possible. Additionally, BSL will continue to advocate for and support our partner City agencies in facilitating quick, clear, and consistent permitting of private connectivity infrastructure investments throughout the City, which, as indicated in our previous report, helped make Los Angeles one of the first 5G cities in the country through a 2600% increase in co-location permits over three years in BSL alone.

Key Analysis of the Lessons Learned

It is the opinion of the Bureau that, while there is still great urgency in getting Angelenos connected, a strategy focused on the immediate interventions deployed at the start of the pandemic (i.e.: subsidies and hotspots) will not deliver sustainable results that will move the City closer to universal broadband service and adoption. Additionally, a strategy that relies too heavily on private sector investment in infrastructure without complementary City investment may not ensure equitable coverage. Given the substantial grant funding and investments that are expected in the coming years from our Federal, State, County and other local partners, the City will be well-served to use the \$10M in unappropriated

⁵ Commercially reasonable efforts: not requiring a party to take any action that would be commercially detrimental, including the expenditure of material unanticipated amounts or management time.

balance to build competency and capacity so that the City can be closely involved in building the equitable future of the internet in Los Angeles. Our proposal is focused on playing to the City's strengths by delivering both permanent public infrastructure investments and targeted, holistic engagement efforts. Coupled with the new and expanding partnerships being built with both our public sector and private sector partners, this will best position the City to assume an essential role in a future regional effort.

UNIVERSAL BROADBAND PROPOSAL

BSL's proposal for the Universal Broadband Services program, created in partnership with the Connectivity and Digital Inclusion working group, is primarily focused on piloting approaches that leverage the City's network of over 200,000 street lights to provide connectivity solutions in our most disconnected communities. This network of powered infrastructure poles is already increasingly providing the platform for a more connected city, with over 3,500 of our poles hosting telecommunications equipment including 5G cells (which helped establish LA as one of the first 5G cities in America). As we look to the future of the internet and the projected massive growth in communications demand from our residents, businesses, and the public sector, we believe that our street lights are optimally positioned to help ensure that this future is equitable.

Understanding that there are also many other jurisdictions working to bring digital equity to Los Angeles, our proposal also hones in on what we see as the City's "competitive advantage" within a partnership that will necessarily include Federal, State, and other local governments, as well as private and non-profit entities. As these partners are also in the process of establishing their own plans and programs, our proposal is designed to hone in on the City's infrastructure expertise, capabilities, authorities, and assets to ensure that we lead from our strongest and most contributory position. Experience from such cities as Chattanooga, New York City, and Ontario, CA has shown that leadership on infrastructure investment is a successful model for promoting municipal connectivity goals.

Our proposal is designed to balance the use of \$10M in one-time funding between providing immediate benefit to households and preparing the City to be a key part of a more equitable internet. As such we have defined two objective areas that have guided our proposal and that will inform our assessment of the program's success:

- Start to Future-Proof our Currently Disconnected Communities: Begin building infrastructure where the need is greatest, and start to establish trusted relationships between residents and public connectivity resources within these communities.
- Build City Expertise and Capacity in Public Internet Infrastructure: Test emerging technologies and applications for internet distribution and delivery, develop and hone the City's competitive advantage in conjunction with other jurisdictions and partners, and prepare the City to be competitive for Federal, State, and other grants opportunities.

Proposal: Community Connectivity Pilots (\$6,000,000)

The Bureau proposes that \$6M, a majority of the \$10M budget for the overall work program, be dedicated to a small number of place-based efforts (at least three) within some of the City's most disconnected communities. As HACLA's experience has shown, concentrated effort within a limited and clearly-defined geographic area can generate successful outcomes. We expect significant variation in scopes between projects, each tailored to its host community's unique characteristics (population density, presence of existing facilities, challenges and assets within the built environment) and possible partnerships and other resources that could be leveraged. Some pilots will include City buildout of public infrastructure (mostly fiber or other high-capacity connection to street poles), while others will be focused on concentrated engagement activities (and will be closely aligned with the next category of the proposed work program, focused on City-wide engagement). For these concentrated engagement activities, we are looking into further partnerships with the County around the Digital Navigator program, as well as exploring the potential with EWDD to stand up one or more new AngelenoCorps FutureCorps cohorts that could be focused on providing direct outreach and engagement within these communities.

To help inform the siting of these projects, the Bureau has reviewed and compiled demographic variables from the American Community Survey (ACS) related to broadband connectivity rates. Additionally, through our partnership with LAUSD, the Bureau has learned about "hot spot" locations where high densities of students with substandard connections live. Based on this data and an initial understanding of potential interventions, we expect the scale of community projects to vary between roughly half a mile square to around two miles square (anything larger would likely limit the effectiveness of outreach efforts).

Given the rapidly changing landscape of connectivity technology, this category will need to be flexible and deliberately designed to support a variety of interventions. That said, the strategic approach of the Bureau is to focus on the very last portion of middle mile infrastructure by bringing high-capacity connections to BSL street poles. As street poles can be found in most neighborhoods and are located close to residences, the Bureau's "theory of change" is that if we can bring the termination point of the "middle-mile" to the sidewalk outside people's homes, then other public, private and non-profit providers can quickly and cheaply provide "last 50 feet" connections. In this way, the City and the Bureau can focus on our core infrastructural competencies and bring valuable assets and physical connections to partnerships with other agencies and organizations that have more robust customer service operations.

For projects that follow this infrastructural approach, we will be able to learn from the in-process \$2.1M CDBG-funded infrastructure pilot which will deliver the first City-owned internet "platform" in a residential community.

Potential Locations for Community Connectivity Pilot Projects:

As mentioned above, for both connectivity infrastructure and outreach efforts, the "lessons learned" point to the importance of focusing efforts within concentrated areas of

disconnected households. As such, the Bureau has prioritized *density* of households in need over *share* of households in need when considering and identifying locations that would be appropriate for Community Connectivity Pilots.

BSL has created a simple index at the Census block group level to support this identification, with the following three factors each equally weighted: 1.) density of households with no fixed broadband (2019 ACS 5-year data), 2.) share of households with no access to broadband (2019 ACS 5-year data), and 3.) density of LAUSD student connections not meeting federal standards (data provided by LAUSD). [A map of this index is provided as an appendix to this report.](#) and points to specific areas of focus that include portions of the following communities: Westlake, Pico Union, Historic South Central, South Park, Vermont Square, Baldwin Village, Watts, Boyle Heights, Koreatown, East Hollywood, Panorama City, Sun Valley, Pacoima, and Canoga Park.

Proposal: City-Wide Broadband Adoption Efforts (\$1,250,000)

Although this report argues for prioritizing concentrated engagement within specific geographic communities, we do not intend to overlook the need for City-wide programs that will be able to achieve broad coverage. We know from ACS data that disconnected households can be found in almost all of our communities, and so our strategy must include some non-place-based efforts to encourage broadband adoption. BSL proposes \$1.25M for this category, which could include a wide range of services and programs available at or through Libraries, FamilySource Centers, and/or other community-based organizations. This category will need to be more fully developed in close coordination with other City departments such as Library and CIFD, and should also be coordinated closely with the efforts of the County.

Proposal: Backbone Infrastructure Installation Pilots (\$2,000,000)

BSL proposes \$2M for infrastructure projects that would support future public or private investments in equitable broadband service. The Bureau is referring to these projects as “expedient” projects because they would be coordinated with other infrastructure installation and/or maintenance (such as pavement preservation) that would dramatically reduce the cost of construction. These infrastructure projects would include installation of fiber, conduit, and other backbone infrastructure that could be easily built upon at a later date to provide last-mile or next-to-last mile connections. With expert consultation (see next proposal), these investments would build upon the City’s existing fiber network to strategically fill existing gaps to facilitate equitable coverage. Experience from other cities (including Ontario, CA, New York City, and Chattanooga) has shown the success of this approach. Along with the creation of backbone infrastructure that can be leveraged for future investments, these pilots would also build the City’s capacities and expertise in internet infrastructure development, which will make the City more competitive for forthcoming middle-mile infrastructure grants from the federal and state governments.

Proposal: Strategic Technical Assistance and Program Support (\$750,000)

BSL proposes \$750,000 for consultant support for the individual projects mentioned as well as an overall City strategic approach to coordinating with regional partners. As mentioned above in the section about County projects, the City and the Bureau will need

consultant support to better evaluate our assets and authorities in relation to other jurisdictions so that we can best position the City to lead from a position of strength and to focus on where we can have the greatest impact. This could include the publishing of a report with recommendations. This line item will also be used to procure expert consultation and technical assistance for the projects described above, in areas where the Bureau and/or the City do not have sufficient subject-area capacity. This will likely include network design and technology procurement.

DIGITAL INCLUSION WORKPLAN STATUS UPDATE

This section provides an update on the \$5 million Digital Inclusion workplan that was approved by Council in October 2021. This workplan is a partnership between 8 agencies: BSL, the Office of the Mayor, the ITA, Library, RAP, CIFD, EWDD, and HACLA. Since October, BSL has been tracking and coordinating project activities across agencies through such forums as the monthly Connectivity and Digital Inclusion meetings. BSL currently expects approximately \$2.9M of the \$5M budget to have been transferred to departments from the CTIEP account where it had been originally moved, and to be expended by the end of Fiscal Year 2021-22. This includes \$1M that was transferred to EWDD for the AngelenoCorps FutureCorps program before the full workplan was approved.

\$520,000 has been requested for transfer to departments via the current Financial Status Report, with an additional \$225,000 being planned for request in the final FY2021-22 FSR. \$500,000 and \$200,000 is planned for expenditure via MOU to the County and HACLA, respectively. A table reporting the funding and project status of each item is included as an appendix to this report. BSL expects most projects related to this workplan to be up and running (or the funding utilized to support program expansion) by the end of the Fiscal Year.

At the February 3, 2022 meeting of the Infrastructure and Technology Oversight Committee (ITOC), the Bureau presented on the status of the Digital Inclusion Workplan. At this meeting, committee members raised questions about performance management of a multi-agency project. BSL is continuing to track the status of each project and to collect pertinent performance and assessment information, including metrics of outputs and outcomes where possible. BSL is also working with the CAO to request quarterly updates of project status from each agency. Once each project is complete, BSL will consolidate this information, along with qualitative assessment of the various projects as provided by each agency, in a summary report to Council and the Mayor.

Changes to Project Scopes:

As noted in the previous report from BSL in response to this Council File, dated September 9, 2021, the Bureau is to request via a report to Council any changes to project scopes and to provide further detail as available for projects that were not fully developed at that time. The following are two project updates that require the approval of the Council.

New Project: Connectivity Stations at FamilySource Centers (\$15,000)

In the administration of the Basic Income Guaranteed: Los Angeles Economic Assistance Pilot (BIG:LEAP), CIFD determined that the digital divide was an immediate barrier to enrolling some participants. At the request of the Mayor's Office and in coordination with department partners, BSL authorized the use of up to \$15,000 in the CTIEP Digital Inclusion account for the purchase of 11 laptop computers and 30 internet hotspots to be provided to FamilySource centers for participants to complete enrollment information. This project will run through the end of March 2022, at which point the laptops will be continued for use at FamilySource centers for digital inclusion purposes accessible to the public.

Proposed Implementation Plan: Promotion, Outreach and Engagement (\$200,000) and Digital Literacy Grants Program (\$300,000)

The scopes for these projects, as presented in September, were to "improve awareness of connectivity-related programs through new messaging and branding on City websites, in paid advertisements, and through a social media campaign" and to develop a "small-grants program to support community organizations as 'trusted messengers' in hosting digital skills training programs." Through regular communications with Los Angeles County Internal Services Department (ISD), BSL has learned that ISD plans to launch two County-wide programs in the coming months, totaling approximately \$3M over a roughly one-year period, that aim to achieve the same goals. The first is a promotion campaign focused on the Federal Government's ongoing \$30/month subsidy for broadband service, which is the most important subsidy available to our residents. This campaign will include creative/messaging development, media buys, events, flyers, brochures, call centers, and reports on effectiveness. The second program is "Digital Navigators," which will issue grants to CBOs to provide skilled and multilingual support staff to help constituents register for internet subsidy programs, access digital County and City services, and improve digital skills and literacy.

Given the close alignment of this effort to the City's goals and its County-wide scale and budget, BSL proposes that the City use the \$500,000 in funding identified for these projects to contract with the County to enhance and expand efforts within the City of Los Angeles. Priority locations and methods that best align with City needs and existing programs would be determined collectively by the Connectivity and Digital Inclusion working group and stipulated in the contract with the County. This will ensure consistent messaging, communication, and administration of promotion, outreach, and engagement. BSL is currently working with ISD to determine the projected scope for their programs within the City of Los Angeles and identify the best opportunities for augmentation. Additionally, BSL is exploring the possibility of incorporating into and/or finding synergies between future AngelenoCorps FutureCorps cohorts and the Digital Navigator program.

FISCAL IMPACT

The \$10 million for Universal Broadband Services in Disadvantaged Communities has been budgeted as part of the 21-22 Adopted Budget in the Unappropriated Balance. There is no additional General Fund impact.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Authorize the Controller, subject to approval of the Mayor, and subject to the creation of the Digital Inclusion Fund, to transfer appropriations in the amount of \$10.0 million from the Unappropriated Balance (UB) to the Digital Inclusion Fund to implement the Universal Broadband Services program:

From:

<u>Fund No.</u>	<u>Account No.</u>	<u>Account Name</u>	<u>Amount</u>
100-58	580353	Unappropriated Balance	\$10,000,000

To:

<u>Fund No.</u>	<u>Account No.</u>	<u>Account Name</u>	<u>Amount</u>
TBD by	CAO / CLA	TBD	\$10,000,000

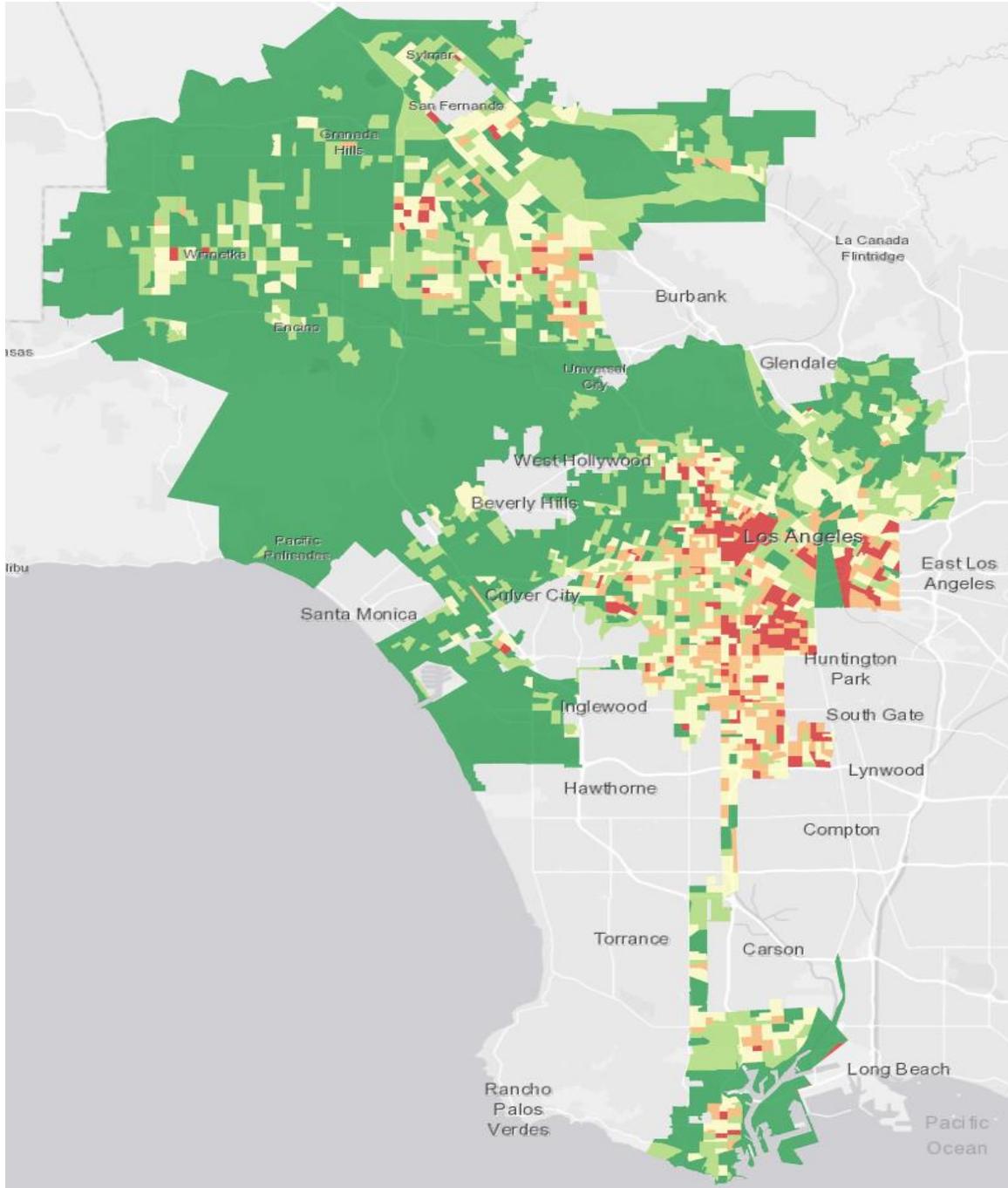
2. Authorize BSL to make necessary technical adjustments, subject to the approval of the City Administrative Officer; and, authorize the Controller to implement the instructions and technical adjustments.
3. Authorize the General Manager, or a designee, of BSL as the administrative and fiscal agent for the Digital Inclusion Fund to facilitate receipt and disbursement of the funds to each participating department as outlined in the above proposed and updated workplans.
4. Instruct BSL to:
 - a. Pursue a more detailed Memorandum of Understanding or an Amendment to the existing Information Sharing MOU with the Los Angeles County to formalize a partnership for joint support of each jurisdiction's projects and programs.
 - b. Coordinate with the Connectivity and Digital Inclusion Working Group to produce more detailed plans for the Community Connectivity Pilots, City-Wide Broadband Adoption Efforts, and Backbone Infrastructure Installation Pilots.
 - c. With the assistance of BOE, BOS, BSS, CHRED, CIFD, EWDD, HACLA, ITA, Library, RAP, CAO, and CLA, report to the Mayor and Council a full accounting of the funds, the scope of projects funded, an update on the execution of the projects, and an assessment of both the previously approved \$5 million and this appropriation of \$10 million.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Miguel Sangalang" followed by a stylized monogram or initials. The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Miguel Sangalang
Executive Director, Bureau of Street Lighting

Appendix A: Map of BSL Connectivity Needs Index

Red and orange areas indicate high values for a combination of the three following factors: density of population with no fixed broadband service at home; share of households with no broadband access; and density of LAUSD students with connections below federal standards. (see “Proposal: Community Connectivity Pilots” for data sources).



Appendix B: Digital Inclusion Workplan Projects/Programs Status

Category	Lead Dept	Program Name	Amount	Status	Revised Budget	Expected Expended by end of FY	Expected Program Start
Direct Department Services	RAP	Computer Labs and WiFi in Parks and Recreation Centers	\$225,000	Transfer Requested In FSR	-	\$225,000	Q4 FY22
Direct Department Services	HACLA	Modernize HACLA Computer Labs	\$200,000	HACLA & BSL working on final budget and MOU	-	\$200,000	Q4 FY22
Direct Department Services	ITA	Expand OurCycle LA	\$755,000	Planned for next FY	-	\$0	Q2 FY23
Direct Department Services	LAPL	Expand Tech2Go	\$225,000	Will request transfer in next/ last FSR	-	\$225,000	Q4 FY22
Direct Department Services	LAPL	Tech Kiosks	\$150,000	Transfer Requested In FSR	-	\$150,000	Q4 FY22
Direct Department Services	LAPL	Tech Try Out Carts	\$145,000	Transfer Requested In FSR	-	\$145,000	Q4 FY22
Direct Department Services	CIFD	FamilySource Center Access	-	Already in use	\$15,000	\$15,000	Q3 FY22
Place-Based Connectivity Projects	BSL	Angeleno Connect Access Program	\$350,000	Will be used for CDBG pilot project internet service	\$300,000		Q1 FY23
Place-Based Connectivity Projects	BSL	Connecting Canoga Park Pilot	\$150,000	BSL working with CD3 on scope -- potential outreach pilot for ACP	-	\$150,000	Q4 FY22

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Category	Lead Dept	Program Name	Amount	Status	Revised Budget	Expected Expended by end of FY	Expected Program Start
Program Support	BSL	Strategy Development and Coordination	\$300,000	Working w/ EWDD to add to existing contract to procure digital divide impact report (Approx. \$150K). Remaining funding in use for BSL staff costs.	-	\$300,000	Q3 FY22
Promotion and Engagement	BSL	Digital Literacy Grants Program	\$300,000	Working w/ County to coordinate / contribute to County-wide digital navigators program	-	\$300,000	Q4 FY22
Promotion and Engagement	Mayor	Promotion, Outreach and Engagement	\$200,000	Working w/ County to coordinate / contribute to County-wide ACP promotion effort	-	\$200,000	Q4 FY22
Workforce Development	EWDD	Vision Lab	\$1,000,000	Plan in development	-	TBD	TBD
Workforce Development	EWDD	AngelenoCorps FutureCorps	\$1,000,000	Already in use	-	\$1,000,000	Q2 FY22