



Memorandum

TO: RULES COMMITTEE

FROM: Mayor Liccardo
Councilmember Carrasco
Councilmember Cohen
Councilmember Foley

SUBJECT: SEE BELOW

DATE: 11/30/2022

Approved by:

Date: 11/15/2022

SUBJECT: ACCELERATING DIGITAL EQUITY BY DEPLOYING HIGH-SPEED FIBER TO ALL HOUSEHOLDS AT NO COST TO TAXPAYERS

RECOMMENDATION

Direct the City Manager to:

1. Explore developing a Request for Information (RFI) or other appropriate open solicitation for respondents to provide approaches to a citywide open access fiber network that:
 - a. Encompasses all or nearly all premises (households and businesses) in the City for 1 Gbps baseline symmetrical internet speeds – undoing decades of “digital redlining” by providing ubiquitous high-quality coverage that will be essential for educational and economic opportunity.
 - b. Relies wholly on private-sector financing for construction, operations, and maintenance, at no cost to the City and our taxpayers.
 - c. Maximizes public benefit to the community, including but not limited to such elements as:
 - provision of free or low-cost broadband service to low-income residents;
 - support for critical City functions, such as traffic signal management;

- co-location of public fiber in the same trench (“dig once”); and
 - provision of free access for schools, community centers, libraries, medical facilities, and other public locations.
- d. Ensures compatibility of the fiber technology (deployment, maintenance, etc.) with existing City infrastructure and processes, considering power availability, disaster resilience, and minimizing surface-level disruption.
 - e. Prioritizes speed of deployment in neighborhoods most historically impacted by digital inequity, while addressing last-mile barriers to access.
2. Identify and bring forward for Council consideration changes the City can make to expedite permitting process for rapid deployment of fiber at scale, including options for effective micro-trenching/fiber trenching that minimize impact on City streets, and including opportunities to offset staffing costs associated with permitting.
 3. Explore opportunities to leverage historical levels of state and federal funding for next-generation connectivity infrastructure to deliver the wide-ranging benefits outlined in Recommendation #1.

BACKGROUND

San José residents, businesses, and visitors expect our city to have ubiquitous, high speed internet access that rivals the connectivity in leading global cities, but uniformly become disappointed by the realities of local average speeds and costs.

Despite tremendous progress in connecting more than 160,000 residents through our SJ Access (Community Wi-Fi) efforts to date, several neighborhoods remain “digitally redlined,” exacerbating our socioeconomic disparities in educational and economic opportunity. Long-term, the community is best served by investments in infrastructure that provide fast and affordable connectivity options, especially residents and small businesses.

Communities at CityLab 2022 shared some of the most current opportunities for infrastructure-level solutions in San Jose, providing members of the City and Mayor’s Office of Technology and Innovation (MOTI) teams with direct insights and areas to investigate. Advances in microtrenching and fiber installation can accelerate digital access to a high percentage of households and commercial areas, improve affordability, and put the community on the path to average internet speeds of 1 Gbps baseline citywide. With a private sector-funded open access fiber network, the City can spur investment and expansion by the internet service providers (ISPs) community – potentially improving service options while lowering prices. Based on industry research and the recent experiences of other cities, it is clear that the timing and options exist to achieve these goals at no cost to taxpayers.

To mirror the energy and investment of potential buildout cities and companies, the City must also commit to a permitting process for fiber deployment that is expeditious, fair, and logical. Fortunately, this builds on the excellent work and experience of the City's small-cell permitting team and processes, developed over the past five years.

To gather direct input from the vendor community and ensure awareness of the City's intent to pursue opportunities for at-scale infrastructure investment to advance high-speed access, options like citywide open access fiber networks, and community benefit models, staff should explore an outreach and/or Request for Information process.

The City has built a legacy of partnering well to serve our community and remedy digital inequities. Through this work, the coming City Council may have options for San Jose's next leap forward in creating the fully connected community we envision.