

From: Wendy Ho

Sent: Tuesday, May 5, 2020 2:34 PM

To: CouncilMeeting <CouncilMeeting@sanjoseca.gov>

Subject: City Council Agenda Item #3.4 - Update on Digital Access and Inclusion for Schools during COVID-19

Mayor Liccardo and Members of the City Council:

Thank you to staff and partners for their presentation on digital access and inclusion for schools. The progress the City has made in advancing its digital infrastructure through the Digital Inclusion Fund is a great start, but we know that there is still a long way to go in closing the digital divide.

As a nonprofit employee and a school board member, I see firsthand how many community members lack online access. It is apparent that having a strong digital infrastructure will be paramount in the COVID-19 recovery process, yet so many of our neighbors will be left out of that recovery without a greater investment in expanding digital access and inclusion.

I hope that the City will live up to its smart city goals and continue to invest and partner with others to strengthen the City's digital infrastructure. The resilience of our community certainly depends on it.

Best,
Wendy Ho

From: Tamara Alvarado
Sent: Tuesday, May 5, 2020 4:49 PM
To: CouncilMeeting <CouncilMeeting@sanjoseca.gov>
Subject: May 5, 2020 Council meeting Item 3.4

Thank you Mayor and City Councilmembers for your on going support of our city during this Covid19 crisis. I'm writing to express my support of item 3.4 and the general idea that the city, the county and ESUHSD work together as much as possible and that the SJ City council sign on to letters requesting communications companies provide the support detailed in the item.

Tamara Alvarado
D3 Resident

From: Gutierrez, Lennies

Sent: Tuesday, May 19, 2020 12:00 PM

To: City Clerk <city.clerk@sanjoseca.gov>

Cc: Olson, Kerstyn <Kerstyn.Olson@sanjoseca.gov>

Subject: San Jose City Council May 19th Agenda Item 3.4 - Digital Access and Inclusion

Good Morning,

Attached is a letter for today's council meeting, agenda item 3.4 on Digital Access and Inclusion. This is in response to the Mayor's letter from May 5th.

Thank you.

Lennies

Lennies M. Gutiérrez

Director of Government Affairs

South Bay and Southern Peninsula - Comcast California



California Region
3055 Comcast Place
Livermore, CA 94551-9559

May 19, 2020

The Honorable Sam Liccardo
Mayor, San Jose
200 E. Santa Clara Street
San Jose, CA. 95113

VIA EMAIL & USPS Delivery
Sam.Liccardo@sanjoseca.gov

Dear Honorable Sam Liccardo:

I am pleased to respond to your letter of May 5, 2020 requesting that California ISPs extend the free period and eligibility for their low-income broadband programs, as well as further remove requirements for eligibility. Comcast agrees that during this extraordinary time, it is vital that as many Californians as possible get and stay connected to the Internet – for education, work, and personal health reasons. Our employees live and work in the communities we serve across California; and are proud of the work that we do in the place we call home.

Comcast's Internet Essentials program is the nation's largest and most comprehensive broadband adoption program for low-income households. Since the program's inception in 2011, Comcast has connected 260,000 California households to Internet Essentials.¹ On March 13, 2020, Comcast made it even easier for low-income families in our service area to sign up for Internet Essentials by offering 60 days of free broadband service and waiving some of the program's eligibility requirements. We also increased the speeds Internet Essential customers get from 15/2 Mbps to 25/3 Mbps for no additional fee, so telework, telehealth, and telelearning can be done with increased ease. **And, on April 27, 2020, we announced that we have extended our 60-day free Internet service offer to new customers through June 30, 2020.**

Internet Essentials has broad eligibility criteria. Applicants must simply reside in a Comcast serviceable area and be eligible for receiving public assistance (e.g., Medicaid; Federal Healthcare Program; National School Lunch Program (NSLP); Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); public housing assistance including HUD, Section 8, Housing Choice Vouchers, etc.; Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF); Supplemental Security Income (SSI); Low-Income

¹ As of the latest public data from June 2019.

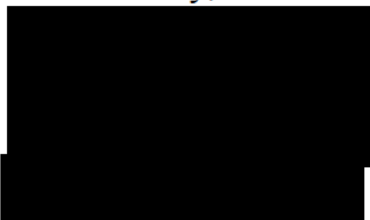
Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP); Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); Veterans Pension from the Veterans Administration (VA); or Tribal Assistance program (including TTANF and FDPIR)). Customers can apply online or through our call centers. Once approved, customers are receiving their equipment and getting online within two business days. We also offer the application in seven languages. If a customer or partner requires help in more than the available languages, they can contact our call center, which supports 240 languages through Language Line at 1-855-8-INTERNET (1-855-846-8376).

To further assist families during the pandemic, Comcast has also waived the requirement that the applicant not have an outstanding past due balance with Comcast in the last year in order to be eligible for Internet Essentials. **This waiver has been extended through June 30, 2020.**

To meet the needs of the community, Comcast is actively partnering with school districts to bring Internet to those without connectivity. We are incredibly proud of our partnership with Internet Essentials in Sacramento. Recently, Comcast California announced it is teaming up with the Sacramento City Unified School District and the City of Sacramento to provide Sac City Unified families with free Internet access for six months. The new initiative, called Sac City Kids Connect, provides Internet Essentials to qualifying low-income families, provided they live in a Comcast service area.

We remain committed, as always, to serving the residents of California. We look forward to working with you on ways to further support our most vulnerable citizens during this unprecedented time.

Sincerely,

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.

John Gauder
Regional Senior Vice President
Comcast Cable Corporation, California Region

To: City Clerk, Mayor, Council

Subject: The Data Does Not Support the Expansion of Community WiFi

Regarding *Telecommunication Provider Collaborations* outlined on page 8 of the 5/19/20 memo, file 20-576, item 3.4, one item not considered is the existing hot spots deployed by Comcast. For instance, there are 25 such hot spots available within a 3,600-foot radius of Yerba Buena high school campus.

Instead of investing in WiFi infrastructure, the city should work with private partners who already have the infrastructure and with other nascent entities that are attempting to expand their broadband infrastructure. This would free up city money for other needed efforts.

For details on my analysis, which was recently published in the San Jose Inside, please see the article below.

In Community,

Ken Pyle

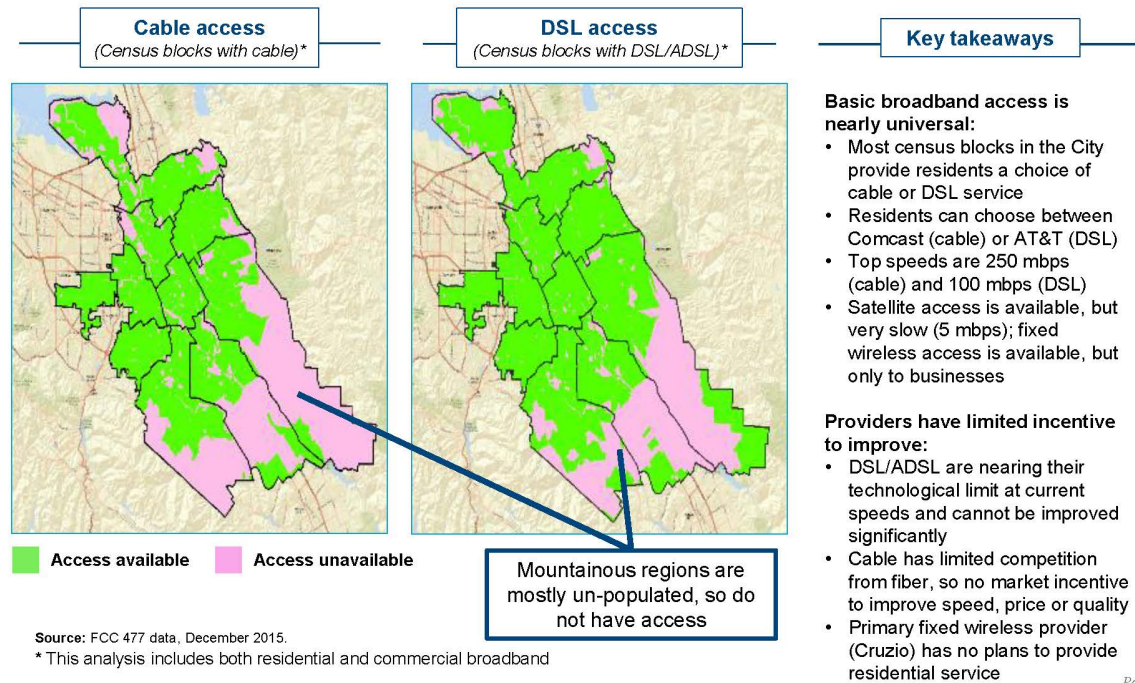
A Better Way to Close San Jose Digital Divide - Submission to Council

The goal of equality of opportunity, particularly around education, is a given. Assuming facility age and upkeep as a proxy for dollars invested per student, then Silicon Valley would have a failing grade in terms of providing equal opportunity. Admittedly, this superficial view is of someone from outside the educational system, but the disparity is obvious as one drives from the relatively affluent westside to the poorer eastside of this former Valley of the Hearts Delight.

And now with the COVID-19 pandemic, the concern has moved from the physical to the virtual structures of school. Online learning has been thrust into the forefront in a matter of weeks and students without broadband will be left behind. And despite what many are saying, broadband infrastructure is not the issue.

Specifically, the expansion of Community Wi-Fi, as proposed in the 5/5/20 City of San Jose Council meeting is a solution to a non-existent problem. It is not to say that the digital divide is not real in San Jose, it is just that access to broadband is not the divide. According to the [latest maps](#) from the State of California, virtually 100% of the households in the City of San Jose can connect to broadband. And this is consistent with the 2017 Broadband and Digital Inclusion Strategy, which shows [broadband availability to virtually 100% of the city](#).ⁱ

San Jose has a functional duopoly of cable and DSL providers, with few incentives to improve speed, price or quality



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Figure 1, City of San Jose, Broadband and Digital Inclusion Strategy, Attachment D

In fact, the [November 2017 City of San Jose Digital Inclusion Strategy](#) does not cite broadband infrastructure as the source of San Jose's digital divide. This report, which was based on a survey of 700 low-income individuals with school age children and expert interviews with over 100 individuals across 30 public, private and non-profit organizations, provides reasons why a little more than 10% of San Jose homes do not have broadband and are summarized belowⁱⁱ:

- "Cost of service and the cost of devices are, by far, the top two barriers to broadband adoption."
- "Many low-income families, especially in the Hispanic community do not understand the benefits of broadband access or that it is essential to complete homework for students today."
- "Contracting and the sign-up process itself, as well as fears around safety and cyber-bulling also discourage adoption."
- "Mobility is a key barrier for elderly populations accessing the internet as well as the lack of products, services, and digital literacy training tailored to their needs."

Why has the City of San Jose begun a hotspot program and why is it seriously considering expanding it, when the issue is not broadband infrastructure, but the issues outlined above?

The City of San Jose's Community Wi-Fi expansion would **cost between \$77 to \$250+ per month** per household served based on figures presented at the May 5th City Council meeting.ⁱⁱⁱ These costs do not

include upfront project costs of approximately \$126M and the assumptions for staff time, marketing and other costs are not provided. It also does not factor the estimate opportunity cost of a two-and-a-half year build out.

Community Wi-Fi Expansion		
Total Project Build Cost		
Title 1 Attendance Areas	87 (Overbuild)	20 (Focused Build)
Area (1.5 sq. miles per)	~131 sq. miles	~30 sq. miles
Project Costs (\$1.45M per)	\$126M	\$29M
Annual Operating Cost		
Annual Program (\$200K + \$50K/ea)	\$4.6M/year	\$1.25M/year
5-Year Refresh Cost		
Infrastructure Refresh (\$290K/yr/ea) (Assumes 5-year engineered lifecycle)	\$25.2M/year	\$5.8M/year
Project Timeline of ~2.5 Years		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expansion Areas Not Yet Identified and Assessed Some Phase overlap will occur to expedite deployment Assumes 2 deployments in parallel the first 5 months, 6 deployments over the next 10 months periods, and 12 deployments the next 15 months period 		

Figure 2, Agenda Item 3.1, May 5th San Jose City Council Meeting

This plan also ignores that [Comcast/Xfinity has opened its Wi-Fi hotspots to all](#), regardless of whether they are Xfinity customers. For instance, today, there are at least 25 Xfinity hotspots within a 3,600-foot radius of Yerba Buena high school, which is one of the targets of Community Wi-Fi expansion. That is, Comcast/Xfinity already has the fiber backbone network and could easily expand by adding additional Wi-Fi nodes on existing strands.

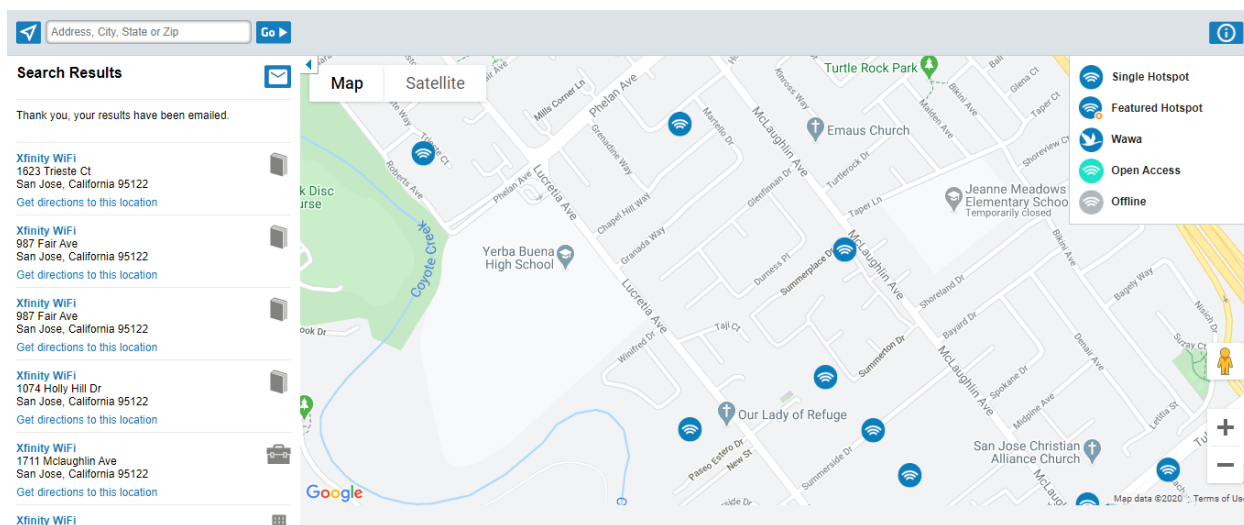


Figure 3, Screenshot of Xfinity Hotspot Map <https://hotspots.wifi.xfinity.com/>

Of course, the best Internet is one that is delivered to the household. Both Comcast and AT&T offer lifeline equivalent broadband packages for \$9.95 per month+ tax. The Xfinity [Internet Essentials](#) package provides 25 Mbps without contract, credit check, installation free and in-home Wi-Fi, solving many of the barriers identified in the November 2017 Digital Inclusion Strategy Report.

Why isn't the City of San Jose more aggressively working with Comcast/Xfinity and AT&T to use their existing broadband infrastructures?

Vice Mayor Jones reported at a recent city council meeting that his office has been working with schools and teachers to identify families that need Internet access and his office has helped connect these families with Comcast and its Internet Essentials program. This is a great example for the rest of the city of how to efficiently close one part of the digital divide without spending the enormous sums required to overbuild an existing infrastructure.

Clearly, there are still other challenges to broadband adoption, such as device availability and digital literacy. By not spending money on infrastructure, more money will be available to solve these challenges and many more that the city faces in these newly uncertain economic times.



Coordination with SCCOE

Coordinating with SCCOE on:

- Quantifying student need in San José
- Identifying connectivity gaps
- Exploring immediate connectivity solutions at schools, parks, libraries, etc.
- Exploring reimbursable/alternate funding streams



~11,600 Devices Needed



Solve Connectivity for ~8,574



Mapping connectivity in
San José

ⁱ Note, that is from 2015 FCC data and does not include new providers, such as [Common Networks](#) and [Sail Internet](#).

ⁱⁱ The [American Community Survey](#) estimates that 89.9% and 94% of San Jose households do not have broadband access or a computer, respectively. This means approximately **32,000** of San Jose's almost 322,000 households do not have Internet or approximately 100,000 residents at 3.14 residents per household. This is consistent with the figures in the [November 2017 Digital Inclusion Strategy](#), which used the same data and estimated 95,000 residents did not have access to broadband.

ⁱⁱⁱ The number of unserved ranges from 8,574 (slide 5 of the staff presentation, provided below) and 32,000 households, which includes non-student households. This assumes serving 100% of the currently unserved with

this network. The cost per household would be likely be higher as the utilization rate would be likely lower than 100%.