

## California Broadband Council (CBC) Meeting

January 24, 2025

9:30 a.m. – 11:08 a.m.

### Meeting Recap and Transcript

In accordance with GC 11123.5, the CBC continued to conduct hybrid teleconference meetings and provide a physical meeting location for the public to view and participate in CBC meetings.

The CBC met on Friday, January 24, 2025 at 9:30am in Covered California's Tahoe Board Room at 1601 Exposition Blvd. in Sacramento. Members of the public, presenters, and ex-officio members had the option to join in person or via virtual conference.

### Housekeeping & Roll Call

A quorum was established for the meeting.

Name	Organization	Member / Designee	Present	Absent
<b>Acting Chair</b> Chief Deputy Director Jared Johnson	<b>California Department of Technology</b>	Member	X	
Commissioner Darcie Houck	<b>California Public Utilities Commission</b>	Designee	X	
Branch Manager Steve Yarbrough	<b>California Office of Emergency Services</b>	Designee	X	
Dr. Kristina Mattis	<b>California Department of Education</b>	Designee	X	
Chief Deputy Director Jason Kenney	<b>Department of General Services</b>	Designee	X	

Undersecretary Mark Tollefson	<b>California State Transportation Agency</b>	Designee	X	
President and CEO Sunne McPeak	<b>California Emerging Technology Fund</b>	Member	X	
Deputy Secretary Michael Flores	<b>Department of Food and Agriculture</b>	Designee	X	
Program Manager Josh Chisom	<b>California State Library, Broadband Opportunities</b>	Designee	Online, X	
Secretary Christina Snider-Ashtari	<b>Office of Tribal Affairs</b>	Member		X
Vacant as of 01/24/25	<b>Senate Energy, Utilities, and Communications Committee</b>	Member		
Mr. Emmanuel Aguayo	<b>Assemblymember Mike A. Gipson</b>	Designee	Online, X	

**Agenda Item 1 – Welcome**

Acting Chair and Chief Deputy Director of the California Department of Technology (CDT) Jared Johnson welcomed Council members and attendees and provided a brief overview of the CBC agenda.

**Agenda Item 2 – Executive Report**

Deputy Director Scott Adams provided a high-level recap of various Broadband for All programs and initiatives, including the Annual Broadband for All Action Plan review & revision process, partner & stakeholder engagement, the State Digital Equity Plan (SDEP) & Capacity Grant, as well as other federal funding and grants. Since the last CBC meeting, California was awarded \$70.2M State Digital Equity Capacity Grant by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). Mr. Adams also congratulated 13 California-serving entities that were recommended for award of the NTIA Digital Equity

Competitive Grant, 6 California tribes that were awarded Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program Round 2 Grant, and Sierra Telephone Company, Inc. for receiving \$11,685,645 award through the USDA 2024 Rural Development Broadband ReConnect Program.

The following CBC members made additional comments:

- Ms. Sunne McPeak

### **Agenda Item 3 – Broadband for All Updates**

#### **Agenda Item 3.1 – Broadband for All Workplan**

Deputy Director Scott Adams reviewed the 2025 focus and highlights of the Broadband for All Action Plan. These highlights include Broadband for All Initiatives, Annual Action Plan Review & Revision, and Coordination & Collaboration. He also shared a flow chart of the evolution of broadband programs.

The following CBC members made additional comments:

- Ms. Sunne McPeak

#### **Agenda Item 3.2 – Middle-Mile Broadband Initiative**

Deputy Director Mark Monroe of the Middle-Mile Broadband Initiative (MMBI) began his presentation by highlighting new and expanded partnerships with the Karuk Tribe and Gateway Cities. He also referred to the coordination efforts between the MMBI and California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) on the Federal Funding Account (FFA) Grant awardees. Next, Mr. Monroe shared an updated timeline on the cumulative installation progress in 2024, emphasized Caltrans' continued partnership role, and provided an operations look ahead timeline. He then reported the economic impact and job opportunities in Tribal Communities as a result of MMBI partnerships as well as the Ceremonial Signing event with the Karuk Tribe in Happy Camp. Lastly, Deputy Director Monroe shared a video highlighting the MMBI groundbreaking with the Karuk Tribe and the updated MMBI fact sheet showing MMBI at a glance, network development activities, and a spotlight on their partnerships.

The following CBC members and presenters made additional comments:

- Commissioner Houck
- Ms. Sunne McPeak

#### **Agenda Item 3.3 – Last-Mile Programs**

Commissioner Darcie Houck from the CPUC provided a snapshot of the Last-Mile Broadband Programs and Investments, including the FFA, Loan Loss Reserve

Fund, California Advanced Services Fund (CASF), as well as the Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program. She noted that the grant solicitation window has not opened yet, however, NTIA approved the challenge map on January 17th. Commissioner Houck also discussed the successes of the FFA, Loan Loss Reserve, and CASF grants.

Finally, Commissioner Houck concluded her presentation by providing updates on the BEAD program, including key milestones in 2024, timeline, subgrantee selection process outreach efforts, and webinar topics.

The following CBC members and presenters made additional comments:

- Ms. Sunne McPeak
- Deputy Director of Broadband Maria Ellis

### **Agenda Item 3.4 – Broadband Adoption**

Ms. Sunne McPeak from the California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF) reported her findings from the CETF Broadband Adoption Survey. In 2023, 544 covered households participated in the survey. In 2024, 201 of the 544 covered households participated in the follow-up survey. Of the covered households, 51.9% mentioned that they did not know how to apply as the primary reason they were not enrolled in the ACP Program. Lastly, Ms. McPeak shared the challenges in reaching low-income unconnected households. Repeated, direct notification remains the most effective outreach strategy.

No CBC members and presenters made additional comments.

### **Agenda Item 3.5 – State Digital Equity Plan & Capacity Grant**

Deputy Director Scott Adams from CDT provided updates on the State Digital Equity Plan (SDEP) and Capacity Grant Program implementation. He began by sharing the key milestones and purpose of the Digital Equity Capacity Grant. Mr. Adams reported on CDT's metrics of stakeholder engagement in 2024 that supported the Digital Equity Capacity Grant program design. Deputy Director Adams then presented a summary of the public comment responses on the draft subgrant program guidelines. The overall themes of public comment included topics regarding program design, funding and costs, as well as related programs and services. Finally, Mr. Adams reported an updated tentative timeline for the approximation of important milestones and next steps for the Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program implementation. He concluded his presentation by sharing information on the January SDEP and DE Capacity

Grant Stakeholder Briefing and Native Entity Digital Equity Capacity Grant application period closing on February 7th.

The following CBC members made additional comments:

- Ms. Sunne McPeak

#### **Agenda Item 4 – Public Comment**

Staff proceeded to address public comments, starting with in-person comments, then those with their hands raised on Zoom, and comments sent in via email.

There were no members of the public that made comments in person.

The following members of the public made comments via Zoom:

- Carolina Mendez, #OaklandUndivided
- Josh Butler, Human-I-T

No public comments were received before the meeting in the CBC email inbox.

#### **Agenda Item 5 – Closing**

Chief Deputy Director Jared Johnson thanked Council members, presenters, and attendees and noted the next meeting is Friday, April 25, 2025 at 9:30-11:30am at CoveredCA and online. The meeting adjourned at 11:08 a.m.

(The recording and presentation slides from the meeting will be posted on the CBC's website.)

#### **Transcript**

Chief Deputy Director Johnson, we may start.

Good morning and welcome everyone to the First California Broadband Council meeting of 2025. I am Jared Johnson, the Deputy State, CIO and Chief Deputy Director of the Department of Technology chairing today's California Broadband Council on behalf of State CIO and Director Liana Bailey-Crimmins, who is responding to the LA Fires. Today's meeting is the Council's first meeting of the year. As you know, the Broadband for All program consists of several different coordinated initiatives and efforts aimed at closing the digital divide and fostering digital equity throughout California. Many of these initiatives have transitioned from planning to implementation and have significant accomplishments to share with Council members and members of the public. Thank you to Covered California and their staff for supporting today's California

Broadband Council meeting. I'd like to start off by just acknowledging the devastation caused by the Los Angeles area wildfires. I think we are all affected in some way by what happened, whether it's friends, family, or colleagues. There's somebody in your life that is probably affected by the fires. We'd like to thank the first responders and emergency personnel who are working very hard to protect those communities from further devastation. And just know that even though we have regular business to attend to today, our priority turns towards the recovery of that area and making that one of the top priorities for the Administration. With that, I'd like to start with some business for the committee this morning. Mrs. Nguyen, will you start with roll call, and review the meeting housekeeping items?

Thank you. Good morning, Council members and members of the public. In accordance with Government Code 11123.5, the CBC California Broadband Council will continue to conduct hybrid teleconference meetings and provide a physical meeting location for the public to view and participate in CBC meetings. Council members, please announce your presence as your name is called, Chief Deputy Director Johnson.

Here.

Thank you. Commissioner Houck.

Here.

Thank you. Mr. Yarbrough.

Here.

Thank you. Dr. Mattis.

Here.

Thank you. Chief Deputy Director Kenney. Undersecretary Tollefson.

Here.

Ms. McPeak, Deputy Secretary Flores.

Here.

Mr. Chisom.

Here.

Thank you. Secretary Snider-Ashtari. Mr. Aguayo.

Here.

Thank you. Chief Deputy Director Johnson, we have a quorum now. Housekeeping items for Council members and members of the public. This meeting is being recorded. We will post the recording of this meeting slides and transcripts to the Broadband for All portal. Attendees, please note there is time allocated at the end of the meeting for public comments starting with in person via Zoom, phone in, and read through of public comments sent via email submitted prior to the meeting. Presenters, please cue Ricki to advance your slides. Committee members, please use your raise your hand feature on Zoom, or raise your hand in person to notify Chief Deputy Director Jared Johnson to call on you to speak. Just a quick note for folks viewing the meeting from home. Please select side by side mode, speaker view when PowerPoint slides are shared and gallery view when PowerPoint slides are not shared. Closed captioning is available, and you can use Star 9, if called in by phone. Chief Deputy Director Johnson, we can begin.

Thank you, Mrs. Nguyen. We have a full agenda today, beginning with an executive report by Deputy Director Scott Adams. The Broadband for All updates will include multiple sub-agenda items. You will hear about the progress made in implementing the State's Broadband Action Plan, the Middle-Mile Broadband Initiative, the CPUC's last mile programs, statewide broadband adoption, adoption efforts, and update on the State Digital Equity Plan implementation and Capacity Grant Program. Finally, as Mrs. Nguyen alluded to earlier, there will be an opportunity for public comments before closing. Would any of the Council members like to make brief opening comments before we begin? I'm not hearing any so we will move forward with Mr. Scott Adams with the executive report.

Thank you, Chair Johnson, members of the Broadband Council and members of the public. Excuse me, I am Scott Adams, the Deputy Director of Broadband and Digital Literacy within the Department of Technology. It's my pleasure to give you a brief update and executive report on our work since the last

meeting. Next slide, please. So really, we wanted to touch on four main issues, and that is you know the last meeting in office in October the Broadband Council gave us permission to commence the annual review and revision process of the California Broadband for All Action Plan. Our staff has begun taking a look at that and reaching out to relevant agencies, and also part of that is looking at now that we have the State Digital Equity Plan, where many of those have rolled up into that. So, we've made good progress on that, and we'll continue to provide updates here to the Broadband Council. The next item we wanted to share is given that you know, the administration and the State's values, and the importance of Broadband for All very pleased to report that our office, the Middle-Mile Broadband Initiative, PUC other relevant agencies and entities have conducted extensive partner and stakeholder engagement to continue to ensure both public and partner input on how we develop these programs and implement them. And you'll hear more about that later in the individual reports. The third item wanted to brief you on is we've made some really good progress on the Digital Equity Plan, particularly the State Digital Equity Capacity Grant and are gonna I think, you know, you'll appreciate the updates later on that we'll go in more detail under the Broadband for All updates section. And then, lastly, given that, you know, Broadband for All acknowledges really, it's a wide umbrella of efforts to close the digital divide and foster digital equity throughout the State. There's been some significant developments on entities within the state of California, receiving significant additional funding beyond which was already allocated, which is excellent news. We wanted to highlight just some of those here during the executive report section, so could you please advance the next slide? I think that, you know, the first thing we'd like to highlight is as it relates to the State Digital Equity Capacity Grant after last October's meeting, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration made it official and officially awarded the Department of Technology on behalf of the state a 70.2 million dollars grant. It's a State Capacity Grant to implement the State Digital Equity Plan, and you'll hear more about how we're intending to utilize that later on. If you could advance the next slide, please. As you know that collaboration, alignment, cooperation is critical, not just between Federal and State agencies, but between state agencies and outside entities, and we're very pleased to report that as a result of the efforts that you know on behalf of the ecosystem earlier this year. In the last couple weeks, the NTIA has recommended that 13 California-serving entities be awarded a total of almost 130 million dollars. And so, we've added the names of the recommended awardees here and wanted to note that you know congratulations to those entities for putting together great applications that align with the State Digital Equity Plan and would



specifically like to call out here the California Emerging Technology Fund was one of the 13 awardees and a member of the Broadband Council.

I just wanted to say, thank you very much. Ms. Parades, that is, on behalf of 51 other partners. So, it is a huge effort of the CBOs, who are new to. I actually am trying.

There you go.

Thank you. Oh, and it stays on. How lovely. I am technologically challenged, although I keep trying to promote technology. And I can't even use a microphone so thank you. But I, what I want to really say is, what's so exciting is that there are new community-based organizations in this partnership who have great relationships with the community. They've been part of the census effort. They were part of mobilization around vaccination. They've never been in the digital equity space. And so, we're looking forward to having this cross-fertilization between very experienced CBOs, very new CBOs that will hopefully be capacity for all of you, and who, many of whom I know, are going to turn around and apply to the to the California Public Utilities Commission in the future. So, it's just a testament to a really broad coalition with the support of most of the regional broadband consortia as well. Thank you, Mr. Adams.

Yeah, and just real quick. I had a couple more slides to complete my report here, because definitely that you know the recommendations on the awards for the competitive grants are important. Could we go to the next slide, please? What we'd also like to report out is through the NTA's Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program they've released over the last several weeks the second round of awardees of grants to that program, and we're really excited that 6 California Tribes were awarded, you know, over 12 million dollars there, and we've included the tribe here wanted to definitely extend our congratulations to them. You know, every dollar counts, and when you start to add this up to what the State is investing, it's a significant amount of funds. Can we go to the next slide, please? And I think, to kind of round out this acknowledgement that we're all collectively seeking to bring back as much funds as possible to the State of California. We did want to acknowledge that recently a program that entities in California haven't been particularly successful in bringing funds back from the USDA's Role Development ReConnect Program, Sierra Telephone Company, recently received you know an almost 12 million dollars, grant from that program. So really pleased to report in my executive report that it's not just the work we do, that the coordination alignment we do with others that leads to

really great successes, and thought we wanted to let you folks know about it, and that concludes my report.

Thank you, Mr. Adams. Do any of the Council members have any questions about Mr. Adams update? Not hearing any comments. Nothing on the Zoom meeting so we will proceed with our Broadband for All work plan updates. First, I would like to welcome Deputy Director Scott Adams to provide highlights on the implementation of the State's Broadband for All work plan.

Thank you very much. Chair Johnson. Good to be back. I think this is going to be really quick if we could go to the next slide, as I mentioned in the in the executive report out, you know, per the direction that was given to us from the Broadband Council at the last meeting staff has begin the annual review of the action plan and revision processes we've reported out in the past 18 of those 24 action items in the action plan are completed. Those that aren't are kind of long term, and we continue to monitor those. The actions that are completed actually still live on, though, and so annually we refresh those we track their progress. You know the calling out of the funds that have come into California directly relates to the action plan, and what we're going to continue to report out here throughout the year is how we can modify how we track progress on Broadband for All from the way it's currently visualized and tracked on the Broadband for All portal to really going beyond and looking at the strategies and key activities and measurable objectives that are outlined in the State Digital Equity Plan. As Chair Johnson mentioned, there's been a slight focus, and how we've organized, how we're going to report out the work here at the Broadband Council. You may recall over the last year and a half or so. Our agendas have already have always had the Broadband for All program updates under one bucket. And then we kind of segregated you know, the Department of Technology and the Public Utilities Commission's work on the NTIA's IJJA Broadband programs. But now is the chair mentioned that both on Digital Equity Plan and on BEAD we've shifted from planning to implementation and to underscore how critical those programs are to the work of Broadband for All we're folding those up into the Broadband for All efforts, and that's, you know, a subtle but important distinction that we're going to make as we move forward throughout the rest of the year. Next slide, please. And again, just to underscore you know the comment that Chair Johnson made in his remarks Broadband for All is the state and the Administration's overarching program to close the digital divide. And it's not just one effort. It's a combination of efforts that are both, you know, interdependent and complementary, that are coordinated at the state level, between agencies and between State agencies

and local and regional partners. And it really that work began in 2010 with the establishment of this body it was further expanded by the Governor's Broadband Executive Order in 2020. The development of the action plan, the historic passage of Senate Bill 156, and the really game changing programs that were structured and funded there through the Middle-Mile Broadband Initiative, the Last Mile programs at the CPUC and then leveraging those IIJA programs. So that is really kind of the evolution of the programs, and it and you know more than likely won't stop there, but wanted to give it a snapshot of you know how Broadband for All has grown, and what it encompasses. And Chair, that concludes my presentation.

Thank you, Mr. Adams. It's reassuring to see all of the progress made with these many programs, and how with the Capacity Grant and the NTIA Competitive Grants and the other programs, they're all starting to be able to make those differences that we envisioned for those most in need. Do any Council members have questions for Mr. Adams' update? Ms. McPeak.

I just want to comment that the Broadband for All Executive Order the action plan is such an asset for California. It's overarching. It preceded action at the Federal level. It will endure past the whatever happens currently in Washington and at the Federal level. And it is really important to see the discipline that you, the department, Mr. Adams brings every meeting to this forum to say, what progress are we making? So that's the North Star, and that is what drives, I think, policy for an action for California.

Thank you. Any other members have comments or questions? I'm seeing none. So next we will move to Mr. Mark Monroe, Deputy Director of the Middle-Mile Broadband Initiative to speak to the significant progress his team and the broader partners have made implementing his historic project.

All right. Thank you. Good morning Mark Monroe, Deputy Director for the Middle-Mile Broadband Initiative at CDT. Happy to be able to have the opportunity to provide another Update on this project. many. Let's go to the first slide here. Many will. Many will, I hope, be tracking the fact that CDT anticipates partnerships to provide for more than 7,300 miles of the 8,000-mile MMBI network. This includes the latest 2 government to government joint build partnerships. We signed this law in recent weeks here. The first is with Karuk Tribe for 2 segments in Humboldt County, totaling 46 miles, one along State Route 101 and one along State Route 96. And we're going to be to present a video on this partnership in a few minutes. The second is with the gateway cities council of governments, the

75-mile Joint Build project provides Middle-Mile Infrastructure as part of a broader FFA grant funded project reaching a number of historically unserved areas in LA County. If we can jump to the next slide. As we all know, providing a connectivity requires both Middle Mile and Last Mile and CDT has worked closely with the CPUC. As FFA grant awards are being made to ensure that MMBI reaches the FFA Grant locations that plan to use MMBI while FFA grant applicants have been working directly with CPUC up until the award of the FFA grant. It's important that CDT also work directly with each of the Awardees, going forward to make sure that both the Last Mile projects and the Middle Mile Project are developed in a way that will facilitate the easiest connection to the MMBI network. Towards the end of the year CPUC and CDT, formalized and implemented a process for both entities to meet with each FFA grant awardee together to generate the necessary information and conversation about how best to connect to the MMBI network. If we can jump to the next slide? Here, you can see a snapshot of where construction on the MMBI project stood as of the end of December, while a few years ago most of the construction was originally anticipated to start in 2025, CDT was able to start construction on more than 3,000 miles of the network ahead of schedule by the end of 2024. So very excited about that this early work is expected to help CDT bring some segments online by early 2026 well ahead of the December 2026 deadline. We can jump to the next slide. As a reminder, Caltrans is a key partner in the MMBI project. First, it is constructing almost 780 miles of the network. And here we can see that Caltrans reports 94% of its pre-construction work on these miles being complete with 91 miles of construction having begun as of the end of December. Caltrans is also installing the network's repeater huts. And now reports having 75% of the pre-construction work on this finished as well with the installation of some hubs scheduled to start in the second quarter of this calendar year. These hubs are the vital last component for each segment housing electronics that will allow the network to become operational and serve those last mile communities. And lastly, Caltrans is also responsible for providing encroachment permits to the RFI squared partners for the almost 4,000 miles of the network that these partners are installing along Caltrans right away. These permits will be secured from Caltrans before construction can begin on Caltrans right of way. So, these will be key in getting the network completed by the December 2026 deadline. Can jump to the next slide? We put together a new visual here, showing our network development effort along the top with installation of hubs and electronics beginning this year, in addition to continued fiber construction, to complete the project on schedule by the end of 2026, as planned. Below, you can see our current marketing effort, as well as we reach out to FFA grant awardees as well as other potential customers. We can also see here an early effort with Golden

State Net to identify customers prior to the operations, TPA coming on board. And as most will be tracking, we are currently in the procurement process for the operator which we plan to complete later this year. Can jump to the next slide? One thing we wanted to briefly highlight is the benefit that the MMBI partnerships will bring in particular to the tribal communities. As noted previously we currently have joint build partnerships with the Hoopa, Yurok and Karuk tribes, and we are working to finalize roughly a half a dozen other similar partnerships. These projects will provide construction jobs and fiber maintenance jobs in these communities. And these partnerships also help develop professional expertise. For these fiber installation, maintenance and network operations within the tribal populations, providing ongoing employment and self-sufficiency. The tribes will be operating these, their own networks will also generate revenues and more broadly as well as rural tracking. The access to Broadband opens up education and employment opportunities within the tribal communities, and some of our tribal partners have also noted that, in addition to providing access to health care, the connections provided by broadband will prove valuable in addressing the isolation that is sometimes reported in these rural areas. If you can jump to the next slide. As noted previously, CDT recently finalized the joint build partnership with the Karuk tribe in December we had the opportunity to travel up to Happy Camp in Siskiyou County to memorialize this agreement with a visit to the Karuk Tribal Cultural Center, and we're welcomed to a meeting of the Karuk tribal leadership for a ceremonial signing. Before I finish the MMBI. I update today, we wanted to share a brief video about this partnership.

For thousands of years along the Klamath River the Karuk Tribe have lived, sustaining culture, ceremony and community. Today they're forging a new path to ensure future generations remain connected to each other and to the world. The Karuk tribe is partnering with the California Department of Technology on the Middle-Mile Broadband Initiative a program building over 8,000 miles of open access network to close the digital divide.

Broadband is so vital. So important to these communities, the economic development the healthcare needs the education needs.

This joint build project will span dozens of miles linking remote stretches of Northern California. It's a crucial backbone that will enable service providers to extend high speed Internet to the Karuk, Hoopa Valley and Yurok Tribes as well as other rural areas.

So, I have 10 children, and I have young ones. I have older ones that are in their late 20s. Covid came. Nobody had Internet to teach our children. They were giving. Passing out these little routers to people (or Hotspots), or whatever people need to have a connection to outside, to talk to their family, to shop. You know those are just little things, but those are really important things. When you don't have a car, and you can't go anywhere.

Before I became Chairman became chairman of the Karuk Tribe. I was a teacher and an educator, and I always told the students to pursue your education, to follow your dreams and the Internet offers you the opportunity to still pursue your education, and that really opens the door for our students to do both.

That's what kids are growing up in now is an adaptive culture that has to learn how to balance both sides of their world, the modern side with Internet education. How do we balance that with our cultural teachings and our ceremonies?

Now this has been their home for 10,000 years, and, as one elder told me, they want to live here another 10,000. There's fear when it comes to progress, because as tribal people, we've learned through past experience that change can be a really bad thing.

My goal. And my dream to see that people that live here could work from home in this beautiful area that we live in and not be forced to make life decisions that take them out or that make them suffer.

Reaching all 58 counties. The Middle-Mile Broadband Network will transform how Californians live, learn, work and connect for generations to come.

Yeah. Thank you. Really rewarding to meet the people in the communities that will be that will share in the benefits of Broadband for All, and the work of this Council. Lastly, I wanted to. If we can jump to the last slide. I wanted to show briefly again the fact sheet that the CDT posts every month on its website you'll see on the bottom corner, you can find the QR code to get these monthly progress updates. And again, these are posted on our website that ends my update on the MMBI project. Thank you and I'm happy to answer any questions.

Thank you, Mr. Monroe. Do any Council members have questions for Mr. Monroe's update? Commissioner Houck.

It's just a comment. I just want to really recognize all of the work that CDT has done. They've been just an amazing partner with the PUC on moving these projects forward, and you can see the early work is going to make a huge difference in getting those last mile projects connected. So just wanted to thank CDT for all of their effort, and I know I wasn't able to go up to the meeting with the Karuk, but I did attend one with Hoopa with CDT, and just really seeing how they're engaging with the communities is really inspiring. So, thank you.

Thank you. Was there a comment here that I missed? Sorry, Miss McPeak.

Oh, thank you, Mr. Chairman. It was great to see Eric Cartwright again. We recognized him as a champion of Digital Equity in about 2016, and at the time we also assisted the Karuk in being able to get their grant after 3 years from USDA and get reimbursed so that they could actually connect them to a grant from the California Advanced Services Fund. So that early work, I think, laid the foundation, as I'm understanding, for then you being able to partner with the Middle-Mile Initiative. My question is so with this middle mile partnership with the tribes which of the ISP should be paying attention and help connect to that Middle Mile to expand service in the Redwood coast.

Well, what I'll say is that for the partnerships that I've talked about so far with the Hoopa and the Yurok and the Karuk Tribes. I'm not. All of them, I believe, are establishing that they're serving as their own ISPs are actually establishing their own last mile, establishing themselves as last mile providers. And that's one of the things we're excited about is to be able to see the level of expertise that they're developing there, you know, when we met up, went up and met with the Hoopa Tribal Leadership a few years ago. They're really building out, you know, they're really developing within the tribal population. This expertise: they go out and they fix their own. They can install things; they fix their own equipment. So, I think that's what's exciting. Part of what's exciting about these partnerships is that largely the ones we've been working with so far are actually creating their own last mile or becoming their own last mile providers on the on the tribal communities.

One last comment, if I might, I know acorn for operates for the Hoopa. So, both Karuk and Yurok are doing a similar ISP. Is that true?

Yeah. So, the for the Yurok they have a Vitell is managing their project, and I would have to get back to you on a little more specifics of what Karuk is doing. I

know the different tribes, you know, there's what 109, I think federally registered tribes. There's a wide variation, as you're aware, between, you know, where some of them are, and these are definitely some of the tribes that are. You know, they've been as you noted they've been putting. They've been working on this for a long time. This is not something that popped up with MMBI. And so, but yeah, I'd have to get back to you on some more of the specifics of what? Of how the Karuk are planning to proceed with that.

So then, what is their charge? Monthly? What are they able to do? It's an affordable Internet service rate for their customers.

So, CDT is still finalizing a rate structure for that. It's broadly expected to be affordable from the standpoint that, compared to a lot of other 2 other providers which have to make back their capital costs the CDT and the State does not need to, so we broadly expect it to be affordable. Our team is working on a rate structure for that. And I'll say ultimately that more broadly. We'll work with our operator when they come on board to put that out, to put out a rate, a broader rate structure.

Thank you, Mr. Monroe, and just a reminder for the MMBI. We do have the Middle Mile Advisory Committee which meets quarterly as well and provides a lot of in-depth information about those initiatives. Next, we'll move on to the last mile program updates from Commissioner Darcie Houck from the California Public Utilities Commission. CPUC has many last mile grant programs that support last mile connectivity to homes and Broadband Adoption. She will share the significant progress CPUC has made over the last year. Commissioner Houck.

Thank you and I will note that we also have deputy director of Broadband, Maria Ellis online virtually as well, and she's going to help me with any questions I can't answer. So again, thank you. I'm really excited to provide some of the updates that we're going to provide today. If you can move to the next slide, please. So, this table is a snapshot of the suite of last mile programs at the PUC that are part of the State's multi-year infrastructure investment, including the multiyear last mile SB 156 programs. This includes the Broadband, Equity, Access and Deployment or BEAD program which is part of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 and is administered by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration or NTIA of the 42.45 billion dollars in program funds. NTIA, I allocated 1.86 billion to California to help deploy reliable Last Mile Broadband service to all unserved locations in California. The Commission has adopted the program initial proposals, Volume one and two, which respectively



establish the rules for the challenge process to determine whether a location in California is served, unserved or underserved for purposes of BEAD funding and to the selection criteria and subgrantee requirements for BEAD applicants, and I'm going to give a more in-depth update of where we are with the program later in the presentation. But I do want to note that the grant solicitation window has not opened yet, and that our challenge map was recently approved on January 17th by NTIA. So, we will be posting that soon our California Advanced Services Fund or CASF continues to support digital equity by funding broadband deployment in low income, tribal and unserved areas through infrastructure, adoption, public housing and technical assistance programs. The CASF has a total of 6 public purpose programs administered by the CPUC that are funded by surcharges. And I'll be providing updates in a later slide. The Loan Loss Reserve program. Now, a 50 million dollars program aims to enable tribes, local governments and nonprofits to finance broadband deployment with more favorable terms when they borrow money from bond markets and financial institutions. So, the CPUC is also administering our last mile Federal Funding Account or FFA, and I'm very excited to provide updates on that program today. This program is roughly 2 billion dollars program that aims to deploy wireline Last Mile Infrastructure in every county of the State. And I'm going to talk about these updates on the awards in more detail in the coming slides. But I would like to highlight that the CPUC has surpassed awarding a billion dollars for the program. And this is a significant achievement. And it's really a testament to the hard work of our staff. They have put a lot of time and energy into working with the applicants, with the public. And we are really proud of the work that that's been done here in surpassing that 1-billion-dollar mark. The multi-year funding represents comprehensive on time investment implementing the vision of Broadband for All. So, today's presentation, I'm going to focus on FFA Loan Loss Reserve, CASF and BEAD, and if you could go to the next slide, please. So, the goal of the Federal Funding Account is to provide direct connection to unserved locations and end users as part of a multi-part strategy for Broadband investment in California. The first grant window closed on September 29th, 2023, and we received 484 applications requesting over 4.6 billion dollars in funding a total of 63 distinct entities filed FFA applications. We have some really great updates to provide here, as we draw to a close on the 1st funding window for the program in December. The Federal Funding Account hit that milestone of the 1 billion dollars. So, I'm going to repeat that again. We hit over the 1 billion dollars to grantees for high-speed broadband infrastructure. This slide shown provides a breakdown of the awards that were issued additionally. So, all of the areas in dark green are awards that have been issued. The areas in light green are pending awards that we have resolutions out for in the white areas we don't

have proposals out for. And I'll talk about that in a minute. But in additionally so last week, on January 16th the Commission issued awards in 2 more counties, which means to date. The Commission has awarded 100 projects in 49 counties, and of these 100 FFA projects 42 are public entities excluding tribes. There are 8 tribal awards. There are 50 traditional Internet service provider awards and of the total projects awarded to date 63 projects will serve majority disadvantaged and low-income areas. The projects that have been awarded FFA grants, and which are currently being recommended for FFA grants, will deploy approximately 6,000 miles of fiber and benefit nearly 2 million Californians. So, during our next voting meeting on January 30th we have proposed awards for 4 more counties, which are the light green awards on areas on the map. Next slide, please. So, in this slide, I'm going to provide some highlights from the projects that have received FFA grants. These projects showcase how the grants have helped to close the digital divide, especially in environmental and social justice communities throughout California that have seen historic disinvestment. The PUC has so far awarded again, 63 projects that will serve majority disadvantaged and low-income areas. Some of these awarded projects also connect to the Middle-Mile Broadband Network, such as the Karuk Tribe fiber to the home project, which was awarded 27.4 million dollars to build broadband infrastructure in Humboldt County. This project will offer both an affordable broadband plan for low-income customers as well as a low-cost Broadband plan available to all customers, and the grantee will also participate in the California Lifeline program. The Terrabella project in Tulare County, which was awarded 10 million dollars to benefit local businesses, farmers, and suppliers in the Central Valley. This project will also offer a low-cost Broadband plan available to all customers and participate in the California Lifeline program and the city of Huntington Park project in Los Angeles County was awarded 25.4 million dollars, and will benefit an estimated 61,000 people, and this project will offer a low cost Broadband plan available to all customers, participate in the California Lifeline program and offer a low-income program. In total, a variety of grantees have been awarded FFA funds, including tribes, county and city organizations, such as the Santa Inez band of Chumash Indians in Santa Barbara County, Nevada County, Fiber, and the city of Fort Bragg. I'd also like to point out how the Middle Mile Broadband Network has been a crucial component to these projects, catalyzing and enabling these projects to serve disadvantaged low-income and high-cost communities. These projects wouldn't have been possible without the Middle Mile Network. As of January 16th, we see 53 out of the 100 projects that have so far received FFA grants plan to connect to the middle mile over 709 million dollars or 71% of the funding from the FFA awards are for projects connecting to the Middle Mile and of the types of entities

connecting to the Middle Mile. We've got 18 public entities, 7 tribes, one incumbent provider, and 6 new entrants into the market that'll be connecting to the Middle Mile. So Middle Mile Broadband Network has really been transformational in enabling the FFA applications and awards that would not have been possible otherwise. So, I just really want to underscore that these are really historic investments that are going to change people's access to the Internet for generations. One example is without the MMBI, we likely would not have seen projects from many of the tribal communities and public providers, particularly in Alameda, Imperial Modoc, and San Francisco counties. Going forward, we anticipate that the Middle Mile Broadband Network will benefit other programs, such as the NTIA Tribal Connectivity Program, the CASF Infrastructure program and the BEAD program by making these projects possible that utilize other programs, and it'll be more cost, effective and cost efficient to have access to this critical resource. Next slide, please. So, I'd like to take some time to share that different FFA, some information about some of the different FFA grantees, and what they're saying about their awards, and share some pictures from events and meetings with the grantees. So, this is a quote from the Siskiyou Telephone Company, a provider in Siskiyou County, expressing how the FFA award will benefit the different communities in the rural regions, and how the project will benefit from the Middle Mile Broadband Network. So, it's a quote from Russell Elliott, the chief executive officer at Siskiyou Telephone Company, who stated, "Western Siskiyou County is one of the most remote regions in California. Encompassing agricultural tribal and multigenerational populations. This grant will ensure many California residents in our rural region will have access to one of today's most critical infrastructure fiber broadband. Finally, the grant will also benefit from the California State Middle Mile Broadband Initiative Project, as the MMBI. Will significantly reduce the last mile cost for the project by building through this project area." On the right are members from the FFA team and members from Siskiyou County folks that worked hard to get these awards issued and to help unserved communities. So next slide, please. Here is another photo, and on the left is it's from the Xfinity Comcast groundbreaking of the FFA Tulare Agriculture County Project. The project will provide up to one Gigabit per second symmetrical service and will benefit disadvantaged communities. 100% of the universal locations are from disadvantaged communities and the photo on the right includes CPUC staff, with city representatives from Fort Bragg, Ukiah, and Vallejo during commission voting meetings held in Sacramento and in Bakersfield. So improved Middle Mile Broadband Infrastructure again paves the way for affordable high speed. Internet in homes, schools, hospitals, and small businesses. The Federal Funding Account has empowered California to tackle the digital divide by investing in critical Middle Mile Broadband Infrastructure,

which is a cornerstone for our last mile connectivity. Next slide, please. So now I'd like to discuss our Loan Loss Reserve Program. This program's goal is to support public entities, tribes and affiliated nonprofits to finance and issue Broadband Infrastructure bonds. Unlike other broadband programs at the CPUC, this program is not a grant program. Instead, this is an innovative tool that can complement other programs to let. Sorry I'm losing my voice today. Leverage debt instruments to help reach our State's Broadband goals, and we know the cost of deploying Broadband Infrastructure is not small. So, we're really pleased to have another program that can aid tribes and local governments to serve their communities through this opportunity. We resolution T17841 was adopted on September 12th, 2024, and that implemented the 2024, 2025 budget agreement that specified 50 million dollars for the program in Senate Bill 1091. On November 7th, 2024, the PUC adopted another resolution T17858, that awarded 50 million dollars in broadband loan loss, reserve funding to the Golden State Connect Authority. And awarding these funds, the PUC looks forward to the program enabling the multiplier effect of bond funded network build outs and demonstrating the impact and value a larger pool of funds will play in expanding Broadband for California. Next slide, please. So, the California Advanced Service Fund continues to serve as an important tool in supporting digital equity, and the goals of Broadband for All the CASF includes a number of accounts and programs. And I'm going to speak to the CASF and its programs in the following 3 slides, this slide summarizes projects and awards in 2024 and over the life of the CASF program by sub account. Since 2008, the CASF has helped close the digital divide in California by providing grants to build and expand Broadband facilities. Grants were awarded for almost 1,300 projects, totaling approximately 460 million dollars. Next slide, please. This slide provides a snapshot on the broadband adoption account, which provides grants to support Digital Equity and Inclusion. The budget this fiscal year for the broadband adoption account is a little above 36 million dollars, and to date the CPUC has approved 432 digital literacy grants that have benefited over 100,000 participants and funded 74 broadband access projects serving over 310,000 participants. The most recent application window for January 2025, we saw 80 applications requesting over 13.4 million dollars in funds for more than 34 counties, and that the information was summarized on that the prior and go to the next slide. Sorry I'm getting ahead of myself here. Okay, we will find that maybe mine is not matching. But okay. The public housing account, this slide provides a snapshot on the public housing account. The program was revised and updated in 2024, and we greatly expanded what applicants can use funding for to ensure that that we're able to provide broadband to public housing and low-income housing areas? This, the budget, this fiscal year for the

Broadband public housing account is approximately 30 million dollars, and the public housing account has connected more than 21,000 housing units with free Internet access. The January 2025 application window saw 32 applications for the public housing account funding comprising 22 infrastructure projects and 10 extension projects. Next slide, please. So, I'll now transition to discussing the BEAD program. So, on September 26th, 2024, the Commission voted to approve the BEAD initial proposal Volume 2, which focuses on the subgrantee selection process. October 3rd of last year, NTIA approved the State's initial proposal Volume 2, which allocated the 1.86 billion dollars in funding to the State to use for implementation of the program. In November of 2024, the PUC submitted our results of the State's challenge process to NTIA for review validation and approval. And on January 17th last Friday, NTAI approved the data that we provided them for the challenge process. So upcoming milestones include conducting the subgrantee selection process with a Q1 to Q3 2025, start and end time frame following the subgrantee selection process, we're targeting a Q4, 2025 timeframe for proposed grant awards. However, all of this is really subject to NTAI review and approval. And I'll go over this in more detail in the next slide. So, please go to the next slide. The timeline you see in this slide represents the 5 work streams that the PUC is using to implement the Federal BEAD program in California before going into the details here, it's worth noting that the State must deliver as of right now, a proposal by October second of 2025. This final proposal will outline proposed subgrants, and the process used to arrive at the selections. And this is an NTAI deadline and as you can see, it's a fairly short time frame to do a lot of work. This program is highly prescriptive, and the main goal of the program is to reach 100% of BEAD eligible locations with either one priority Broadband project, such as end to end fiber 2 reliable Broadband projects like cable, DSL, and terrestrial licensed fixed wireless, or 3 alternative technologies which include low earth orbit satellites. In regards to the BEAD planning documents, the first workstream process you see in the table the requirements of the BEAD. They show the requirements of the BEAD Program, the 5-Year Action Plan and the Volume 1 outline, the overall project and rules for the Challenge Process, which again has been approved. And the Volume 2 outlines the subgrantee selection process, which has also been approved in 2024. The final proposal will be in October 2025. The final proposal will be submitted with results of the subgrantee selection process. In regards to the challenge process, the PUC did follow NTIA's model challenge process, and again we submitted our results, which were approved last week. Next, in our next milestone, is moving forward with the subgrantee selection process, which is outlined in Volume 2, we started conducting outreach and education on the solicitation process in December, with a 10-part webinar series meant to help

would-be applicants understand the requirements of the program, especially given the short timeframes that we're looking at and how to prepare their applications. We've already completed 4 of the webinars. All of these are recorded and can be found on the PUC's website. And we anticipate opening the BEAD application process towards the end of Q1 in March. We will communicate broadly across all channels on the schedule and deadlines. Deployment is expected to begin in late 2025, but again, timing is dependent on NTIA and Commission approvals on the final proposal. Since 2023, the CPUC has conducted public outreach to gather input from potential BEAD participants, beneficiaries and other stakeholders. This outreach included statewide public engagement in collaboration with our partner at the California Department of Technology and the CPUC continues to conduct outreach through webinars office hours and informational sessions leading up to the challenge process. We know there's going to be a lot of questions. And we want to make sure everyone knows that our staff are available and ready to respond. Next slide, please. So, in conducting outreach for the subgrantee selection process, the PUC is committed to ensuring stakeholders are well-informed and prepared to participate in the application process. To support this goal, the PUC is housing a series of webinars and office hours; these sessions are open to anyone who wants to attend. Each section of the webinar will focus on a critical aspect of the program as seen on this slide that shows the various webinar topics. Office hours will take place in 2025, starting January 9th, these sessions are an open forum for stakeholders to ask specific questions, seek clarification and gain personalized guidance on the BEAD application process. So, in 2025, from 1 to 2pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays, you can block your calendars. If you have questions or want to participate in this process for BEAD outreach opportunities. And again, that will include webinars and office hours. Stakeholders are encouraged to attend these sessions, to fully understand the requirements and opportunities provided through the BEAD program, and the events are designed to promote transparency, collaboration and success for all potential grantees. And that concludes my presentation. I know that was a lot of information in a very short period of time, so I will turn it back to you Deputy Director Johnson.

Thank you, Commissioner Houck. Do any Council members have questions about Commissioner Houck's update?

Of course I do.

Miss McPeak.

Mr. Chairman, I just it's so much information. I apologize to everybody for asking questions. But I was struck in all of the well. First of all, it is a lot that is being done, and I appreciate the outreach, the webinars, the focus that Commissioner Houck in particular, brings to trying to get deployment to the publicly subsidized housing complexes and farm worker housing. So, thank you. I wanted to ask about in at least one of the deployment awards FFA there is participation in Lifeline. So, 2 questions around that one is that being encouraged by the PUC across the board. And 2 is the Lifeline participation in the in at least the one award that you referenced a bundled service of telephone and data.

So, I can say that yes, we are encouraging, and the Lifeline participation. And I can let Maria, if she wants to provide more information on that and the packaging. But I think because the program is focused on broadband, I am not sure that we can go beyond that. But let, I'll let Maria talk about the specifics, but Lifeline is something that we see as a priority for these projects.

Thank you, Commissioner. And thank you for the question and council person McPeak. I want to make sure that I understand which project you're indicating. There were 3 projects in that general presentation that were specifically referenced. Overall, generally speaking, of course, encouraging while Lifeline participation in Lifeline is not a required requirement for the program. It is highly encouraged. And certainly, we see a lot of value in the bundled approach of being able to bundle those services. But if you tell me the specific project, I can certainly look that up and follow up.

Okay, I'm looking back. It was a ton of a presentation. I actually thought it was with the Karuk.

Yeah, there was actually the Karuk tribe, the Terrabella Project and City of Huntington, I think, are all included on Lifeline.

Although it's not listed on the on this slide specifically. But I think you may have mentioned that. That's and... I know you're smiling at me, Deputy Director Ellis, that I'm asking about Lifeline, but I'm you know, trying to really understand how it is, how it's working and how we can encourage it, which is, I mean, I want to congratulate you for getting that commitment. I'm just wondering, can we get more of the project implementers and operators to embrace the Lifeline program.

We? Certainly. We certainly welcome that feedback, and certainly we'll continue to encourage applicants again. Not having it been a requirement. We are, we are really actually very hardened by the fact that many applicants have chosen our preemptively to sell, to choose to offer that important benefit.

Great. Thank you.

Okay, thank you. Commissioner Houck and Deputy Director Ellis. Next, we are going to move to the Broadband for All update on Broadband Adoption. This will be coming from Ms. Sunny McPeak, from the California Emerging Technology Fund, who will share a few highlights from the CETF Broadband adoption survey, Ms. McPeak.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This report is actually pursuant to Action Item Number 16 in the Broadband for All Action Plan. It was also part of the original executive order for all of us to work together on getting everyone online. Going to the next slide, if we can. Let me just say for the moment. What I'm going to report to you top line is...We're making progress together, but it is becoming increasingly more difficult to reach the poorest households the most digitally disadvantaged. And so the data I'm sharing is just evidence to that. And underscores how in trying to complete the obligations in the Broadband for All Action Plan that we need to be even more focused, intense, and figuring out as many strategies as possible. So, on this slide, what you see is a follow up that we did to, with all of the low income actually covered households. In the 2023 statewide survey that was conducted in partnership with the California Department of Technology, University of Southern California, and the California Emerging Technology Fund. To provide the data to inform the Digital Equity Plan and the BEAD plan. And we reported all that before we went back to the 544 households in that sample that was more than 3,200 that were covered households, and on the left-hand side you see the responses there from the 544 households. As to who was connected, who was unconnected, and who was under connected; under connected are those who have a smartphone only. The really good news is overtime, by the way, we have significantly increased the number of low-income households that are connected and decrease the number who are under connected. One of the primary reasons that that happened, by the way, was school-based strategies that actually allowed devices to go home, so that there was not just a smartphone in the house. There was also a device that had a connection to the Internet through a variety of ways. On the right-hand side, and we usually have our surveying firm that did the first 2023, they did the 2024 to all, 544 who agreed to be called for whom we paid a \$25 gift certificate to



participate. Our goal is to screen into an ongoing panel of low-income households that were randomly selected to begin with and remember that random selection, what is called; a random digit dialing that also had texting, and online versions, a blended approach, the top-of-the-line technology or methodology. It took a thousand contacts and calls to get one household to participate. It was just. It's a huge lift. It's the most expensive methodology in the State. Excuse me, that exists period. And only California did that for a Digital Equity Planning process. All others, just you rely on a panel, and that panel tends to be about 10% out of variation with an actual random sample. And we verified that through many, many analyses of other programs. So we went back in the performance standard is to call 16 times before we give up on a household, and we got 201 to participate. And that is not because the households didn't want to participate. They also want \$25. It is an indication of they changed telephone numbers. They had a prepaid number to begin with. They have had to move. They can no longer pay the bills. I just want to underscore what we are talking about in terms of economic fragility for the poorest households at 150% of Federal poverty level. But the good news is, as you can see just by the pie charts that we have gotten more connected still decrease the under connected, and we still have a big challenge of the unconnected. And it's that unconnected that we really together have to focus on. And might I also add my personal thanks to the Department of Technology for doing all the formatting here that helps us present this in a coherent way. Next slide, please. So, what I also want to show these bar charts are asking again, households. So, if you applied for ACP, why or why not? Basically. And the good news is we've, by the way, also verified is the 201 subset of the 544, representative of the 544 in terms of socioeconomic demographics, and the answer is, yes. With respect to what languages are spoken at home? What are language barriers? What is the income level and the spectrum, or the distribution of ethnic background? And what you find here is that almost 52%, 51.9% said they didn't know how to apply which actually is very consistent with the 64% in 2023 who said they didn't even know about ACP. I want to underscore for a moment that's not because people didn't make the effort. There was a lot of effort that we all made in outreach. It's that the people that are still today are still not connected, do not know about the programs. They're just trying to keep daily lives together. And it means you have to be very persistent, continue outreach over and over again. And then I do want to acknowledge that the majority who could recall, if they had enrolled in ACP said that their ISP did give them enough information about switching, or that their program was coming to an end. The vast majority couldn't remember if they were enrolled in ACP, who were enrolled in ACP, I mean, it's just literally.

Okay. I'm online. I don't know what the program's called. I don't. I've somehow got service that is just the reality that we're trying to really speak to. And then even more discouraging at this point, or sobering, let me put it in that term. Sobering is that almost 70%, 69.3% said they've never heard of an affordable Internet service offer. Okay, so all of them are connected who are connected through an existing Internet service provider, all of whom who have affordable offers and are still not making the connection or providing the information, or if they're providing the information. It's not getting through to the household that they qualify for a reduced rate. That's the challenge we have. So going to the next slide. I want to just share that. Here you can see this is exactly what I said. Those who had been enrolled in ACP, and then those who have switched to and know about an affordable offer. The data is very helpful to give you insights as to again the same challenge of being aware, and were they informed of a lower cost offer. The majority can't remember if they were informed about a lower cost offer. This is again because they are so focused on just trying to survive each day, and that means even more of a lift. The last slide, if we can go to it is actually a summary of the final results. And that is we still find today that what works is what we call direct notification. And that is a credible source, different than a trusted messenger. A credible source is generally a public agency. It is also, by the way, the utility companies, the energy companies, what we call investor-owned utilities. Also, the Muni utilities because nobody wants their lights turned off so they will actually open a letter that is, from their energy or gas company that will say, "Hey, you're on our care program. Do you know, you also qualify for an affordable offer." That gets a great response. But the highest response comes when our Department of Health care services and our department of Social services mails out to everybody who is on Medi-Cal and CalFresh, "Hey? You're eligible for also an affordable Internet service." Those two departments are on their third round of direct notification. The first two were ACP. They're now notifying everybody. Okay, it's an affordable offer. But throughout California. in all of the service areas, the combination of Who is your telephone company? Who is your cable company, both of whom will offer an Internet product. It's at least a hundred 60 different combinations which need to be offered in about 5 different languages to begin with, and then tailored to the community, who might have other languages, and that is too complicated to send all of these households to. So, they're all now being directed to come to one call center, where 70, 80, 90 CBO... employees are online everyday handling those calls in language, in culture. What we used to find is that with ACP 80% of the folks could enroll themselves because there was one place to go to, which was, we gave them a button. They could go directly to the FCC. And if they were on a program linked eligibility. Medicaid or Snap, which is our

Medi-Cal and CalFresh in California. They would be able to enroll themselves in 5 min because they had the documentation of being eligible through that program. And we would only have to help 20%. Today, we have to help 100%, because there's no central number where you can enroll yourself and sort out which call center, which ISP, you're supposed to talk to. So, everybody we help then ends up on a three-way call a CBO with the customer, with the ISP, so they don't get upsold. (By the way) in that previous slide, about 10% said they were sold a higher cost product. So just keep in mind, the good news, it's only 10%, but there is upselling that still goes on and that they weren't told about. The truly affordable offer. They were supposed to get ACP for free and know that they could do that because the product was being offered at \$30 that they got the ISP would get the reimbursement on. So last conclusion is, these numbers really are. Again, I call them sobering. We used to be able to reach out to a hundred households, and one call would come in, we would help that. There was a hundred to one. Today we can get a response doing about 115 to one. But the enrollment, the enrollment to reach an unconnected, low-income household. A covered household at 150%, or below the Federal poverty level is one to a thousand. That means repeated, repeated, repeated outreach. We need to have every channel possible reaching out. And that is collectively what we've got to figure out how we're going to do more of more, of more frequently, and not stop until we get every last low-income household online. When you poll the households across the state less than 1% say they don't want to be online. They are not low-income households. They are older adults. All of us are aging. Who don't want to be bothered with technology until they're told that is how you stay in your home and can-do telehealth remotely, and then they all say, sign up. That concludes my report.

Thank you, Ms. McPeak. Do any Council members have questions or comments? Then we're all ready to go right. Figure out the next steps. Thank you. I'm not hearing any comments or questions or seeing any online. So, we will move ahead.

Mr. Chairman, may I just a point of privilege. I want to acknowledge my team, which is very, very small, very lean. Who does all this work in direct notification. So, Patty Bibby runs the call center. Marissa Canche manages all the connections. There's Charlene Tatis who supports that. And Kyle O'Ryan, who is here with me today.

Thank you for that. All right. Next on our agenda will be an update on the State Digital Equity Plan and Capacity Grant Program implementation from Deputy Director Scott Adams. Mr. Adams.

Thank you. Chair Johnson. Pleasure to provide an update on the status of the Digital Equity Planning capacity grant implementation. If you could go to the next slide, please. As I said at the top, that really a lot of the State Digital Equity Plan and the Capacity Grant are funded by the Federal Government, and really the last year and a half has been about planning. But now we're shifting into implementation, and the probably the most pressing part of implementing the Digital Equity Plan right now is taking the funds that were in receipt of from the Federal Government to implement the plan and completing the design of our capacity grant and moving forward with the subgrant program. Some key highlights we just wanted to, or milestones we wanted to remind the Council of is that one thing that's not on here is technically, we provided the NTIA with our State Digital Equity Plan at the beginning of last year. And on March 28th, the NTIA let us know that that plan that was developed with input from over 50,000 residents and stakeholders, was approved. The very next day the NTIA released the notice of funding opportunity for the capacity grant to help implement that we went through a fairly extensive multi-month, long period of curing and merit review. That was from like May 29th to October 24th, and then received notification on November 4th that we would receive our grant, which was 70.2 million dollars. The performance period of that grant started on December 1st of 2024. Next slide, please. And so, you know, we've heard about the various investments that have been going on for Broadband for All. There's the significant infrastructure investments. There's the very extensive suite of programs that are administered by the CPUC. There's the work of others like the California Emerging Technology Fund and the many, many partners at different levels throughout the State. The purpose of the Digital Equity Capacity Grant wanted to kind of, you know, clarify for the council and members of the public is to really fund entities, either statewide, regional or local; to conduct activities, to help implement the Digital Equity Plan statewide. And really to work, to address the Digital Equity barriers, many that we've heard around access or affordability or adoption at the local, regional and state level. It's also to be used to help develop regional, and local ecosystems, and increase capacity. And part of that. What's unique about this program is it does allow for a portion of the funds to be used to develop regional and local Digital Equity Plans that align with the State plan. And then beyond that, I think it's no surprise. It will provide digital inclusion funding to trusted messenger organizations and community. We're endeavoring to allocate funding across every county. And we'd like to use these

funds also to encourage statewide innovation in terms of, you know, getting people connected and Broadband adoption. I just want to note that a lot of people think of innovation in the sense of technology and automation. But some of this innovation could be like analog innovation, which is like collaborations and partnerships and programs because a lot of it, you can't necessarily use technology to connect people that aren't connected or who have technological barriers, so wanted to kind of highlight that distinction. Next slide, please. As we said, engagement and collaboration and alignment is so critically important here. There were so many organizations and individuals and residents that contribute to the Digital Equity Plan. We wanted to take great care that we designed the subgrant program with input from those who were actually going to be using the funds and doing the work. And so what we wanted to summarize here is kind of the metrics of engagement that have occurred over the last 7 months. We've done 7 digital equity, implementation stakeholder briefings. Those are different than the Broadband Council meetings where we're constrained by Bagley-Keene and the members of the public can speak, but they can't necessarily engage. And so these are really, you know, we've endeavored to make these bidirectional, to have breaks after we bring up information, and to have really fruitful conversations and back and forth to understand the things that potential recipients of subgrants are asking us to consider. We've done 2 different surveys on program design and subgrant. We've done over 120 market research meetings and listening sessions with potential subgrantees, vendors, etc. And we've participated in 20 presentations kind of outside our programmatic framework to meet folks where they are and to speak to the opportunity. Next slide, please. So, when we were here in October, we were in the middle of the public comment period, or I'm sorry at the end of the public comment period on the draft guidelines for the subgrant program. So, we wanted to close the loop on that with you all and just give you a summary of how that public comment period ended. And so, we received 66 public comments from organizations throughout the State. There were actually, we allowed the ability to provide multiple comments on multiple sections of the guidelines. So, it was really 192 comments when you break it down by the input that we've received. Public comments were received from organizations representing 49 counties in California, and that's kind of visualized with the map on the left. And then 79% of the commenting organizations expressed interest in applying, so definitely indicating interest and demand out there. Next slide, please. Don't want to get into super detail here, but to let you know the kind of the breakdown of the general themes of the public comment were on program design. So folks were had some really good input on the application structure on application timelines given, there's a lot of different programs that folks are

applying for covered populations. So how we can direct the funding. Other comments were bucketed into funding and cost. You know, what's the funding allocation that we're thinking about? How would we allow costs that might be different than other grants and what were cost caps? And then the really, the third bucket is related programs and services where stakeholders were interested in how we had framed the program design of the grant, like, you know, would we procure, develop, and provide centralized services and to support grantees to do the work like a digital literacy platform (and also data collection methodology). Another bucket was just asking about the relationship to the Digital Equity Plan and the Capacity Grant really asking for clarification, that yes, like, we have direct guidance from the Federal government to develop a plan, and the funds that we use must be the funds that we allocate must be used to achieve the objectives and targets outlined in the plan. And then some really great feedback about how we could learn from their experience and develop a technical assistance program that would ensure maximum subscription, and that all dollars are used. These are time dependent dollars and support people in doing quality applications. Next slide, please. So, this is our tentative timeline. And again, there's a lot of different rows. I think the thing that I would direct your attention to is really, you know, I think row two is critically important. Stakeholder engagement is gonna really be a consistent you know, focus throughout the implementation of the Digital Equity plan and the administration of the capacity grant. The third row the post award NTIA state requirements. What's really important is that arrow, December 1st, 2024, was our period of performance begin date. We technically have 9 months from that start date to engage in contracts to receive you know, to actually launch the grant program and identify who the awards are going to go to. It's a 5-year grant program, but there is a tight timeline to getting the funds out there. And then, the last thing that I'd like to kind of point out on this slide is row four really shows. We intend to launch the subgrant program this quarter of this year. And the components there'll be a 60-day request for application period, a 90-day review period, and then a 30-day period which we intend to, and hopefully make all awards. And then I guess I will say, lastly, there's a, you know, the subgrant technical assistance program is something that's going to be really critical. And we intend to actually start that beginning next month so that we can help folks get ready to do their applications. Okay, have one more slide here, can we? Next steps, we would love to remind both the Council and the ecosystem. This vast network of partners we've all established over the last couple of years that our next stakeholder briefing is going to be conducted virtually over Zoom on January 31st between 1:00 and 2:00. There's a QR code there at the bottom where folks can, you know, go to the link and register again.

It's a very open exchange of information and feedback. And then, lastly, given again, how important it is for us to seek additional sources of funding that we did want to, you know, a reminder to the ecosystem that the Federal native entity, Digital Equity Capacity Grant is a separate pool of funding specifically for tribes that is still open and closes on February 7th. So, to tribal entities in California or entities that work with tribes, we encourage you to take a look at that if you haven't, and we've provided a QR code on how to get to that application package. So, Chair, that concludes my report, but if you would indulge me, I forgot to mention this at the top. I do want to acknowledge the you know, entire staff of the Office of Broadband and Digital Literacy, and our extended group of consultants and folks that are supporting us to do the programmatic work every day. We've got a small, but mighty team, and they really put their hearts into the work that they do. And so just wanted to thank and acknowledge all of them, and also for the flawless execution of these meetings that they do. So, thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Adams. Do any Council members have any comments or questions? Ms. McPeak.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. Of course I do. So, thank you very much, Mr. Adams, for the presentation, and for the analysis of the of the public comments. So, my questions, the following in talk, in looking at the most digitally disadvantaged, and all of us for two and a half years, focused on the 5.8 million households that were eligible for the affordable connectivity program which had eligibility up to 200% of the Federal poverty level. The covered households have eligibility up to only a 150%. It turns out that of that 5.8 million households who are eligible, three-fifths were between the 150 and 200% federal poverty level. They are the majority that we were able to enroll in ACP, as I reported earlier. The rest didn't even know about it, and it's hard to reach, harder to reach them. They largely can't afford that. \$30 a month. Many have just converted over to a \$30 a month, ISP offer. We're still trying to really understand that, but that's. They can most of them at the 150% or below, they cannot really afford \$30. Say they're much more in that range when they are in a focus group of somewhere between \$15 and \$20 that, they say, is a value proposition. They might, they'd really, we, you know, welcome paying 10, quite honestly. Okay, having said that. In your thinking about the process and all those beautiful arrows that you presented. And when you're going to call for the applications. How are you now thinking about what you'll expect or require of all the sub awardees, the subgrantees, in reaching the 2.9 million who are the most fragile, the most difficult to reach. And (by the way) in 2022, NTIA said we had 19.5% of our whole

population was covered households which matches all of our own data internally. Today, they've now moved it up to 19.6. So, it's increased by a 10th of a percentage point. We're going in the wrong direction on income. The gap on income inequality is growing. It underscores, the need to focus on the less disadvantaged. How are we going to do that in the Capacity Grants?

I'm thinking about that. That was a lot. So, that I am. Should you like me to answer, focusing on the last part? Is how are we going to focus on? Yeah, thank you. Well, it's pretty clear in the Federal guidelines for the Capacity Grant that what the NTIA's asking us to focus on is covered populations. The first of which is households at or below 150% of the Federal poverty line meeting the measurable objectives of you know the Digital Equity Plan that are, you know, getting everyone connected, having lasting and meaningful change and engaging with stakeholders. And so the requirements that we will ask of the grantees will be that the funds that are allocated through the capacity grants the subgrant program really be focused on aligning with the strategies, the key activities, and the measurable objectives that we've outlined in the plan, and that really, when you think about it, we're going to have to report as a state up to the NTIA, the progress that we're making every year. And so, it's not just going to be qualitative but quantitative data on the impact that our efforts are making, and we'll talk more about that next Friday at the stakeholder briefing. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Adams. Thank you, Ms. McPeak. Next, we'll move on to our public comment. Mrs. Nguyen, will you please provide the public comment guidelines, and begin with public comment?

Thank you to ensure everyone who wishes to make public comments, has the opportunity to do so. We respectfully request one person per entity, and 2 mins per person. The order of public comments will be in-person comments, Zoom, and phone comments, and emailed comments submitted prior to the meeting. For in-person comments, please form a line at the podium for Zoom. Please use the raise hand features in the lower toolbar. For phone, please press Star 9 to raise your hand. There were no comments submitted by email prior to the meeting. We will start with the first person in line at the podium. Chief Deputy Director Jared Johnson, I do not see anyone in line, so we'll move on. Next, we will hear comments from Zoom via hands raised for call in, please press star 9. I see one hand raised. Carolina Mendez.

Hi everyone!



Please unmute.

Can you hear me?

We can hear you.

Okay, great, thank you. Good morning, my name is Carolina Mendez, and I am the Program Manager for Oakland Undivided. Given the collaborative nature of the Capacity Grant which requires applicants to coordinate across regions. We asked the CDT to please release the capacity grant guidelines before the application window opens, and as soon as possible. This will allow enough time for community-based organizations to coordinate and establish well-formed regional partnerships and to review the guidelines to create a cohesive project ideas that will center our community. Thank you.

Thank you. The next speaker, we, or the next commenter we have on Zoom Josh Butler.

Yes, thank you. I just want to thank Deputy Director Adams and CDT for the thorough process that they've provided for public comment and participation in the development of the subgrant process. I'm the Senior Policy and Advocacy Manager at Human-I-T. We work in across the nation so I've had an opportunity to participate in Capacity Grant opportunities in different states and in California. We have by far the most thorough and complete opportunity for the public to participate. And so, I just want to thank CDT and the Broadband Council for the opportunity to participate and looking forward to helping close the divide here in California. Thank you very much.

Thank you for your comment. Just looking around once more time to see if anyone in the room. I also don't see any online or phone. Chief Deputy Director Johnson, that ends our public comment session.

Thank you. Are there any Council members who would like to make additional comments before we close the meeting? Seeing none or hearing none. So, I want to thank the Council members and presenters for their contributions today, and to the members of the public, for your thoughtful comments. I also want to express my gratitude for those working so diligently to move things forward, to close the State's digital divide and foster digital equity in California. Your work is valued and is taking critical steps in laying the groundwork to achieve

Broadband for All. Our next meeting is scheduled for Friday, April 25th, 2025, starting at 9:30 am at Covered California, and online. We look forward to seeing everyone then. With that, we will conclude the January 24th, 2025, California Broadband Council meeting. Thank you.