



# Middle-Mile Broadband Initiative

Middle-Mile Advisory Committee Meeting

April 18, 2025

Minutes and Transcript

The Middle-Mile Advisory Committee met on Friday, April 18<sup>th</sup> at 10:00am PST via virtual conference and in-person.

## Agenda Item 1: Welcome

Chair Bailey-Crimmins welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced new members, Senator Caballero, Assemblymember Aguiar-Curry and Secretary Maduros.

Chair Bailey-Crimmins welcomed and thanked all MMAC members, designees, presenters and attendees.

A quorum for the meeting was established.

Member		Designee	Present	Absent
California Department of Technology	CIO & Directorate Bailey-Crimmins		X	
California Public Utilities Commission	President Reynolds			X
Department of Finance	Chief Deputy Director Perrault		X	
Government Operations Agency	Secretary Maduros		X	
Department of Transportation	Director Tavares	Chief Deputy Director Keever	X	

State Senate	Senator Gonzalez			X
State Senate	Senator Caballero	Designee was Kyle Krueger	X	
State Assembly	Assembly Member Tasha Boerner			X
State Assembly	Assembly Member Aguiar-Curry		X	
County of Monterey, District 1	Supervisor Alejo	Local Government Representatives	X	
County of Del Norte, District 2	Valerie Starkey	Local Government Representatives	X	

## Agenda Item 2: Executive Report Out

- **Mark Monroe** provided the Executive Summary Report on:
  - As of the end of March 2025, our partners have moved more than 3,500 miles of preconstruction to construction and are expected to start construction on the first hub next month. (The hubs will house the electronics for the network.)
  - We also continue to work with FFA grant awardees to facilitate connection the MMBI network as we continue to look ahead to the operation of the network.

## Agenda Item 3: Project Updates

### CDT

- **Mark Monroe** provided the California Department of Technology's (CDT's) update:
  - Joint-build partnerships continue to play a critical role in network development, now comprising approximately 96% of the 8,154-mile system. This includes a new tribal partnership in the state's northwest region. An updated chart highlights ongoing progress toward maximizing community coverage through FFA grant recipients, all within the Legislature's \$3.873 billion budget.
  - Since January, CDT has completed a price cap benchmark for FFA awardees using data from competitive urban markets. While operators will ultimately set prices, the cap ensures affordability and supports network planning.

- As of March, over 3,700 miles have entered construction, with 100+ miles of fiber completed. CALS is building all 305 miles of its segments, and Five Square partners have begun work on 3,476 miles. Note: construction figures exclude huts and electronics essential to full network operation.
- **Shannon Martin-Guzman** provided an update on the installation maps and government-to-government partnerships:
  - Since January, installation activity has increased by 691 miles, largely due to partners leveraging existing conduit to expedite pre-construction work. American Dark Fiber, a joint-build partner with 901 signed miles, has begun construction on seven segments (totaling ~110 miles) and aims to complete all installation by Q3 2026, while also supporting other partners' builds.
  - Arcadian is nearing 90% completion of its design and engineering work and is expected to begin construction on highway segments soon. TPN 299 has completed 100% of its installations and is actively splicing and testing fiber. Bold is approximately 75% through its scope, and Lumen has completed five routes totaling 527 miles, with more expected by Q3 2026.
  - Tribal partnerships continue to expand:
    - Hoopa Valley has completed design and engineering, with construction expected before quarter's end.
    - Whitetail is 85% through design and engineering and targeting a June construction start.
    - Karuk is building three segments totaling 46.3 miles in Humboldt County, with construction forecasted to begin in Q3.
  - Other key updates include:
    - Siskiyou Tel nearing completion of design and targeting construction start in Q2 2025.
    - Vero Fiber has three segments (26 miles) in Humboldt County, with one segment completed.
    - CVIN, the largest partner, has over 2,600 leased miles and has begun installing fiber on 14 segments.
    - Digital 395, procured from the California Broadband Cooperative, is ready to deploy electronics upon prep completion.
    - Gateway Cities Council of Governments is advancing a 74-mile project through 27 cities in early design.
    - The City of Los Angeles Bureau of Street Lighting began construction in April on a 13-mile segment near I-110.

- A high-level view of construction status across RFI<sup>2</sup> partners along the Caltrans right of way. Of the ~4,400 network miles within the state highway system:
    - 759 miles have closed out,
    - 673 miles are under construction, and
    - Over 3,000 miles await permitting.
  - New government-to-government partnerships include a recently executed agreement with the City of Los Angeles Bureau of Street Lighting, and active negotiations with several tribal nations and the City of Fort Bragg.
- **Mackenzie Shea** gave insight on the FFA interconnection:
    - Over the past several months, CDT and CPUC have continued coordinating to ensure that all FFA awardees planning to connect to the Middle Mile have the opportunity to engage with the MMBI Customer Solutions team. These meetings assess both last-mile and Middle Mile builds to identify optimal interconnection points, discuss service needs, timelines, and pricing.
    - This collaboration helps maintain up-to-date visibility into network development and ensures alignment with the needs of FFA grantees. Additionally, efforts around marketing, sales, and operations are advancing in parallel with network installation to support timely service delivery.
  - **Mark Monroe** gave an update on the MMBI operations and timeline:
    - There is simultaneous work on installing the network & preparing for its operational readiness. The focus remains on ensuring that all segments are ready to serve the target communities effectively.
  - **Monica Hernandez** gave an update on Stakeholder Engagement efforts:
    - Since the launch of virtual stakeholder meetings in early 2024, registration and attendance have declined, while overall stakeholder contact has increased. The team has introduced a monthly fact sheet, available on the website, and remains committed to consistent updates and transparent communication.
    - Upcoming outreach includes tentative visits with the Chumash Tribe in May and Vero Fiber in Arcata in June. The Department continues to promote milestones and celebrate progress with partners statewide, reinforcing that every mile counts.

- **Elias Karam** gave an update on Caltrans Builds and Partner Builds & Encroachment Permits:
  - Caltrans provided an update on their progress, highlighting the completion of preconstruction work for 305 miles and the design of 107 network hubs. They have issued encroachment permits for 326 miles and are working closely with CDT partners to support them through the permitting process. Caltrans emphasized the importance of meeting state and federal requirements and the value added by the environmental process.

#### GSN

- **Erik Hunsinger** gave an update on Off ROW Hub Deployment & Network Construction and Hub Power Status:
  - Discussed the importance of hubs in making the network operational. Hubs are essential for placing electrical equipment to turn the internet on and light the fiber. They also play a crucial role in establishing connectivity for partnerships and customers
  - The **Hub Power Status** chart shows that 128 power connections are needed, with **PG&E** responsible for the majority (**52.4%**, or 65 connections), followed by **SoCal Edison** (23) and **Pacific Power** (7). Currently, **27** connections are awaiting final hub design, **39** are under utility review, **27** are in engineering, and **35** are in pre-construction. This highlights the scale of coordination required across multiple utilities to power the network.

#### CPUC

- **Maria Ellis** gave an update on the Last Mile Programs.
  - provided an update on the last mile programs, including the Federal Funding Account (FFA) and the BEAD program. The first round of FFA awards has been completed, and a second expedited round is now open for applications. CPUC is committed to ensuring that every county receives funding and is actively working with stakeholders to prepare for the grant process.

### **Agenda Item 4: Public Comment**

Public comments were made by:

- Paula Treat
- Dr. Larry Ozeron
- Lindsay Skolnick, CA Alliance for Digital Equity (CADE)
- Patrick Messac, Oakland Undivided

Public comments highlighted the challenges faced by partners in the permitting process, particularly with Caltrans. There were calls for more streamlined and consistent processes across districts and better support for tribal communities. The importance of broadband access for rural and underserved communities was emphasized, and there were suggestions for leveraging private funds to ensure broadband for all

### Members Final Comments

Committee members raised concerns regarding permitting delays, construction timelines, and the absence of a comprehensive project plan. They emphasized the urgency of meeting the 2026 deadline and called for greater coordination between CDT, Caltrans, and project partners. Suggestions included streamlining processes and incorporating direct updates from partners in future meetings.

### Closing Remarks

Chair Bailey-Crimmins thanked everyone for their attendance and participation **and announced there will be an ad-hoc MMAC meeting in May specifically for the RFI<sup>2</sup> partners to provide updates.** The Q3 MMAC meeting will be Friday, July 18<sup>th</sup> from 10am – 12pm. The meeting adjourned at 11:55am.

### Transcript

**The Chair:** Alright Good morning, everyone and welcome to the April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2025, Middle Mile Advisory Committee. It's our second committee of 2025 so thank you for everyone that is joining today. And I also would like to thank Sacramento County for letting us use their beautiful boardroom here. I know we are kind of a roaming Advisory Committee, we kind of end up in different boardrooms but thank you very much this is the second time we've been able to use their facility so thank you. We also have a few new members. In January, one of our members was introduced, but I wasn't here, so I'd like to introduce her. It is Senator Ana Caballero. She represents the 14<sup>th</sup> district, which includes Merced, Madera, Fresno. She was also the mayor of Salinas, my town that I was born in, and she was also Assembly member for the 28<sup>th</sup> district. She has been an advocate ever since I've known her for MMBI and so we're very, very pleased to have her join us. We also have Assembly member Aguiar-Curry. She is representing the 14<sup>th</sup> District and native of Yolo County. She was the first woman to be mayor of Winters and was elected to the Assembly in 2016. In her position as Assembly member, she is focused on being a champion of rural broadband, healthcare access, infrastructure and reproductive rights. We also

have a new secretary of Gov OPS Nick Maduros. He was appointed in March 2025. He previously led the California Department of Tax and Fee Administration for almost 8 years, overseeing a \$96 billion annual revenue. And he's all about improving operational efficiencies. He also served as the chief of staff at the U.S. Small Business Administration under President Obama, where he managed a \$120 billion loan portfolio and achieve record lending. It is an absolute pleasure to welcome these members, and I'd like to open up the dais to see if anyone wants to say a few words. Alicia, any? All right. With that, we'll go ahead and call the Middle Mile Advisory Committee to order the first rule of order is to call the roll, Ms. Alvarado.

**Alicia Alvarado:** Thank you, Director. Housekeeping rules. Attendees, please note there is a time allocated at the end of the meeting for public comment. Presenters, please cue Sam to advance your slides. And committee members, please use the raise your hand feature on Zoom to cue the chair to call on you to speak. Now, committee member roll call. Chair Bailey Crimmins.

**The Chair:** Here.

**Alicia Alvarado:** Secretary Maduros. President Reynolds. Chief Deputy Director Perrault.

**Chief Deputy Director Perrault:** Here.

**Alicia Alvarado:** Director Tavares?

**Michael Kever:** Michael Kever for Director Tavares.

**Alicia Alvarado:** Senator Gonzalez. Senator Caballero. Assembly member Boerner. Assembly member Aguiar-Curry

**Assembly member Aguiar-Curry:** Here.

**Alicia Alvarado:** Supervisor Alejo.

**Supervisor Alejo:** Present.

**Alicia Alvarado:** Supervisor Starkey.

**Supervisor Starkey:** I am here.

**Alicia Alvarado:** Madam Chair, we have a quorum.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. Before we get started today, are there any committee members who would like to say a few comments? All right. Supervisor Alejo.

**Supervisor Alejo:** Yes, Madam Chair, I want to apologize for not making the last January meeting. I was there ready to attend the meeting in person but that night we had a battery storage facility. We have the largest one in the world here in Monterey County and Moss Landing, and it was on fire, so I had to leave to attend that morning press conference at 8 a.m. So, I want to just apologize and let people know why I was not able to attend last meeting. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Supervisor. I know you always are so involved, so we appreciate everything that you do. And that was obviously a very important situation that you had to take care of. So, thank you so much. We are going to go ahead and shift to the first order, first item. Oh, yes. Aguiar-Curry, assembly member.

**Assembly member Aguiar-Curry:** Good morning. I'm hoping you can hear me. Good morning. I just want to thank you for being included in the middle mile conversation today. I've been involved with the Middle Mile as well as all the internet for now since 2014. So, I'm anxious to be back in the saddle and seeing how we can move these projects along. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. All right, the first agenda item is the executive report out. Mr. Mark Monroe.

**Mark Monroe:** Good morning. Mark Monroe, Deputy Director for the Middle Mile Broadband Initiative here at CDT. Welcome to our second quarterly MMAC meeting of 2025. We appreciate the opportunity to provide another update on this project. In our efforts to reach the unserved and underserved communities throughout the state, we continue to work towards our 2026 completion date for the state's 8,000 mile MMBI network. We can go ahead and go to the next slide. As of the end of March, our partners had moved more than 3,500 miles of construction, or too construction. And we expect to go to construction on the first repeater hut in the next month. These huts will house the electronics for the network that really make it all work. And so we're very excited for this next step. We continue to work with the FFA grant awardees to facilitate a connection to the MMBI network as we continue to look ahead to operation in the network. And that ends my executive report out.



**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Monroe. Are there any questions or comments from any of the members of the committee? All right, we'll go ahead and go to the second agenda item is an update from the Department of Technology. We have several presenters. Mr. Mark Monroe, Mr. Martin Guzman, and then we also have Monica Hernandez. So, I will go ahead and turn it over to you, Mr. Monroe.

**Mark Monroe:** Thank you. All right. As I think we all appreciate, our 7,800 miles of joint build and lease partnerships continue to be a vital tool in development of this network. These partnerships now make up approximately 96% of the network and will soon include another tribal partnership up in the northwest corner of the state that we're hoping to sign in the next week here. If we can jump to the next slide. For those of you who have been following the project for the past few years, here's an updated chart of, again, how we are meeting the state's commitment to maximize the communities served with the FFA grant recipients that reached within our current funding level. We can see the total estimated miles are currently around 8,154. Again, we're able to fit this within the \$3.873 billion that the legislature has provided. We move on to the next slide. As many will be tracking, there are approximately 60 FFA or federal funding account grant awards who plan to connect to the Middle Mile Broadband Initiative to our network. We continue to meet with these FFA grant awardees. A key data point. These last mile partners have been waiting for is the pricing. And so since the last time we met in January, our team has completed its price cap benchmark for FFA grant awardees. And CDT used data from several well-served competitive urban markets as the basis for these caps as a measure of affordability. While the actual pricing will be determined by the operator once the operator is on board, it was important to develop a price cap for what it would cost the FFA grantees to use the MMBI's service to provide affordability and allow the FFA grantees to plan and budget for their networks. Next slide. Lastly, here's a high-level summary of construction progress. We can see that more than 3,700 miles have gone to construction to date. And because of this, more than 1,900 miles of fiber have been completed as of the end of March, Caltrans has gone to construction on all 305 miles of its segments. And our RFI Squared partners have gone to construction on 3,476 miles of their segments. It's also important to note that when we talk about going to construction and being completed here, that doesn't include the huts and the electronics that make the network operational. So we just want to make sure everybody understands that just because we finished a section doesn't mean that it's ready to connect. But these are the big milestones in terms of developing the 8,000 miles. It's really developing the full constructing the 8,000 miles. With that, I'll hand it over to

Shannon Martin-Guzman, our project delivery manager, to talk through the progress we are making with our individual partners. Shannon.

**Shannon Martin-Guzman:** Thank you, Mark. As a delivery manager, it is promising to hear that we have over 3,700 miles of network either constructed or in construction right now. But we are not done yet and must keep the momentum going forward. Next slide, please. Since the January MMAC, we have increased our installation miles by 691. These miles are mostly attributed to partners that had existing conduit installed, which greatly expedites the pre-work needed to get shovels in the ground. Next slide, please. American Dark Fiber. American Dark Fiber is a joint build partner, and as Mark reported earlier, American Dark Fiber now has a total of 901 MMBI network miles assigned and has already started construction on seven segments in various areas of the state totaling about 110 miles. They are forecasting to have all installation completed by Q3 of 2026 and will also be assisting other joint build partners with their construction as contracts are carried out. Next slide, please. Arcadian is another joint build partner. Arcadian Infracom is on the tail end of design and engineering, which includes all of the environmental work needed to clear the way for construction. And it's currently estimated at 90% complete for that phase. As environmental obligations are met, they will be heavily dependent on our Caltrans partners, issuing encroachments expeditiously as it will allow them to start construction on the highway system. Next slide, please. Next partner is Zayo. Zayo is a partner that is coming up on the tail end of their assigned scope to install 194 miles of conduit and fiber. To date, they have installed 170 miles, which equates to 88% of their scope. They are forecasted to have all 194 miles installed by Q2 of this year. Next slide. Our next partner that I would like to report on is TPN-299, also known as Trans-Pacific Network. And they are making amazing progress on their scope as well. They have installed 100% of their miles and are actively splicing and testing the fiber optic cables. The next major milestone for this route taking place over the next year will be the installation of the hubs and electronics needed to operate the network. Next slide, please. Our next partner is Boldyn. This is a lease partnership. And to keep the momentum going on project nearing completion, I would like to highlight that Boldyn is approximately 75% complete with their scope, which equates to a little over 60 miles of installed conduit fiber. The routes highlighted on the map are all forecasted to be completed by the end of Q3 of this year. Next slide, please. Next partner is Lumen. And Lumen has made some amazing progress on their scope as well, which is over 1900 miles and is split by both a lease and joint build agreement. Lumen spans are broken up by 20 unique routes across the state. Of the 20 routes, 4 have been completed, totaling 527 miles. With an additional 11 actively installing fiber now. All routes are forecasted to be completed by Q3 of 2026. Next slide, please. Our next partner

is Hoopa Valley. This is a joint build partnership which consists of a 22 mile stretch along State Route 96, and they have recently completed all of their design and engineering, along with all environmental requirements. Hoopa is anxious to get shovels in the ground upon issuance of required encroachments. And it is estimating that construction will begin before the end of this quarter in June. Next slide, please. Next, we have YTel. YTel is a tribal partnership that was introduced to the program back in July of last year. Design and Engineering is currently at 85% complete and they are striving to get construction started by June of this year. Next slide, please. And the next partnership is Siskiyou Tel. Siskiyou Tel another partner that is on the tail end of their design and engineering and is aiming to start construction By Q2 of 2025. The route does have some areas with the existing infrastructure that will allow them to perform some construction via maintenance encroachments, while construction encroachments are pursued. Next slide, please. Vero. Vero's a joint build partner who has three segments totaling 26 miles in Humboldt County along the Northern California coast. One segment is completed that runs along the east side of the Arcata Bay. The second segment, north of Arcata started an installation in October of this last year, while the third, a two mile segment across the Humboldt Bay Bridge, is forecasted to start installation in Q1 of 2026. Next slide, please. This is CVIN. CVIN is our largest partner with over 2,600 network miles that will be leased throughout the state. The scope of work consists of a combination of a little over a thousand miles of existing conduit and about 1,600 miles of new construction. As of today, CVIN is 90% complete with design and engineering for the new construction component. And has started installation of fiber through existing conduit on 14 of their 91 segments. This equates to over 370 miles throughout the state, while additional routes are dependent on issuance of permits. Next slide, please. This is an update on the Digital 395 progress. Digital 395 was a route that we procured from the California Broadband Cooperative along the Highway 395 corridor, totaling 423 miles and nine hubs. Hub preparation for MMBI electronics began in March of this year, while the electronics to operate the network have been procured and are ready for deployment upon completion of the prep work. Next slide, please. Karuk is another tribal partnership and is our newest to the program and they will be building three segments totaling 46.3 miles in Humboldt County in Northern California. Design and Engineering is currently at 95%, while installation is forecasted to begin in Q3 of this year. Next slide, please. Gateway Cities Council of Governments. Gateway Cities is one of the newest joint build partnerships within the program and consists of a 74 mile project within the 27 gateway cities of Los Angeles. They are in the early stages of design and engineering, and construction schedules will be developed in the coming months. Next slide, please. City of Los Angeles Bureau of Street Lighting. The City of Los Angeles Bureau of Street Lighting agreement for a 13

mile stretch was executed in February of this year. This route is adjacent to Interstate 110 on local roads, and they hit the ground running and actually got shovels in the ground in early April of this year. Next slide, please. This slide provides a very high-level overview of each RFI squared partner's construction statuses as it relates to miles on a Caltrans right-of-way. Approximately 4,400 network miles falls within the state highway system with 759 miles of the construction routes closed out 673 miles in construction and a little over 3,000 miles that will require some form of a permit before proceeding with construction. Next slide, please. And for the final slide, I would like to report on some of the recent government to government partnerships. As noted in one of the earlier slides, we recently executed an agreement with the City of LA Bureau of Street Lighting While we are actively negotiating lease agreements and joint build projects with the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians, The Quechan Indian Tribe of Fort Yuma, The Coyote Valley Band of Pomo Indians, the 29 Palms Band of Mission Indians of California and Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation. In addition, we are in negotiations with the City of Fort Bragg and anticipate executing the formal agreement in Q2 of this year. I'd like to thank the members for allowing me to report today. Next, I would like to hand it to my colleague, our regional business manager, Ms. Mackenzie Shea.

**Mackenzie Shea:** Hi, everyone. Thank you for having me today. My name is Mackenzie Shea and I'm the Regional Business Manager at CDT for MMBI. Today, I'm going to be presenting an update on the MMBI interconnections and collaboration with FFA Last Mile awardees. Next slide. Over the last several months, CDT and CPUC have continued to work together to ensure that any FFA awardee that intends to connect to the middle mile is given an opportunity to meet with the MMBI customer solutions team. As CPUC awards these FFA grants, CDT has then scheduled customer solutions meetings with the grantees in CPUC to discuss project-specific details. One of the topics we usually spend a lot of time on is identifying and agreeing on interconnection locations. If you look at the map on the right, the orange dots represent some of these interconnection locations we have worked on with the FFA recipients. As well as some other entities. During our meetings, the FFA awardee and MMBI team will analyze both the last mile and middle mile builds to determine the best interconnection locations. Sometimes FFA grantees will already have a preferred location to interconnect, while others are still in the initial design stages and do not have a location identified yet. We work together to identify optimal connection locations for both the last mile and middle mile. All in all, there's a lot of coordination that has to happen between multiple parties, including the grantees, CDT, and our build partners. That's why it's so important that we are having these discussions now as it allows us to be proactive in planning these connection locations prior to the network being operational

and ensure we're ready to provide service to the FFA grant recipients as soon as possible. Another item we discuss are the types of services that they are interested in for their last mile project. This can vary from Lit services to dark fiber and co-location in our heads. We also will go over the timelines of when they need these services and how they relate to the middle miles' timeline as well as their build details. These conversations give us more insight on the FFA grantees projects, which also help us design solutions tailored to the grantee's needs when needed. Finally, one recent topic that we've been covering has been the FFA pricing. As Mark mentioned earlier, we've recently released cap pricing for certain services with the Middle Mile Network. In the last month, we have presented this pricing to FFA awardees and have gone over any questions they may have on it. We now have reoccurring meetings scheduled with many of the FFA grantees where we continue to discuss network updates and finalize more interconnection locations. The dots on this map will continue to grow as these conversations progress. By continuing this engagement, this allows us to stay up to date on the latest status of both the last mile and middle mile networks and ensure we're identifying and meeting any needs of the FFA grantee. With that, this ends my presentation on FFA interconnections. I will hand this back over to Mark to discuss our operational look ahead.

**Mark Monroe:** All right. Thank you, Shannon. Thank you, Mackenzie. Great, exciting updates there on the progress that the team is making. Lastly, before I turn it over to Deputy Director Hernandez to discuss CDT stakeholder engagement efforts, I want to remind everyone how we're working on towards marketing and sales and operations currently at the same time that we're working on installing the network. With the end goal of all segments being operational and ready to serve the state's unserved and underserved communities by the end of 2026. Monica.

**Monica Hernandez:** Thank you, Mark. Good morning, everybody. I'm Monica Hernandez, Deputy Director for Communications and Stakeholder Relations at the Department of Technology. And I'm going to provide you with a brief update summary of our last stakeholder engagement meeting. And then also with our new members, give a little bit of context and background as to the stakeholder engagement work. As you know, MMBI, the Middle Mile Broadband Initiative, is a complex infrastructure project traversing the entire state of California. Since this is an open access middle mile network, it is quite attractive and interesting for communities because of its proximity, reducing local costs to tapping in and providing increased and reliable internet service. Kind of seen as an equalizer and helping to close the digital divide. In late 2023, when I joined the department there were significant critical comments and questions during public comment at the Middle Mile Advisory Committee. Most

of these comments were expressing concerns about external communication, external engagement, and transparency in decision making and transparency in the project progress and milestones. As you know, with Bagley-Keene, Middle Mile Advisory Committee members are not allowed to respond to public comment. And as such, it left many stakeholders feeling frustrated unheard I might even say a little angry with us. And so, we knew we had to fix this. As it was, the advocates and community stakeholders only had the middle mile advisory committee meetings to get a lot of detailed information and have access to express their opinions and their concerns. And while public comment is still welcome, it didn't meet the needs of our stakeholders or our departmental and project goal of transparency. So, our core question was, how do we improve our transparency regardless of the audience, create a venue for stakeholders across the state to have opportunities to ask our programmatic staff hard questions. And with the support of the Middle Mile Advisory Committee at the beginning of 2024, we launched virtual stakeholder engagement meetings that were held on a quarterly cadence, can I have the next slide please, and those follow the middle mile advisory committee. They have a close correlation to the agendas we have here with additional information that may have developed in the few weeks between the meetings. The objective of these meetings really is to increase transparency, improve communication for stakeholders across the various components of the middle mile broadband initiative. We send these agendas in advance to all of our registrants. We invite questions ahead of the meetings so that we might adjust our agenda. As well as encourage questions throughout the actual meetings. And you can see our schedule here for the rest of the year. If I could have the next slide, please. Our most recent meeting was in January. And since about the middle of 2024, we've seen a downward trend in our meeting registration and our meeting attendance. However, we've seen an increase in our registrants and our overall contact list. This could be a result of the regular meetings and our stakeholders now having direct contacts, essentially real people within the department to reach out to and talk to. And it could be a result of the increased transparency we've created both through our website and direct communications. Can I have the next slide, please. At the end of last year, and this is partially due to the feedback we've gotten from our advocates, one of the things we have done is created a monthly fact sheet that is accessible through our website. You can see where the green arrow is. That's a quick download. Or if you follow the QR code, it'll take you to the landing page that's shown. Next slide, please. This is just a quick snapshot point in time. It's really important to call out in the upper right hand corner the published date so that data presented there is valid at that point. It's a really good one peak. And we've updated this on our website the fourth Monday of every month. And in consultation with our advocates and stakeholders, all of

our website updates, including our interactive map, are pushed live at the same time one of the specific points of concern was folks didn't know when the website was going to be updated with new information. They weren't getting told like, oh, if you go one day, the next day it might be different. It was very confusing. So, we committed to them to have a more transparent and consistent time for updates. I'm not going to go into the nuances and all of the information that is available on the online map, but if you have any questions about that our team can follow up outside of here. And while we can't do everything that we're asked for we continue to listen to our partners and our stakeholders. And again, make adjustments where we can because we too want to meet our commitment for transparency and improved communication. If I could have the next slide, please. You heard from Shannon earlier, lots of progress that is being made with partners across the state. When possible, we want to celebrate these. We want to promote these. The communities across the state have been working and waiting and planning for this statewide investment. So tentatively, we will be with the Chumash in May and with Vero Fiber up in Arcata in June. The Chumash story is really interesting. Some people might look at that and say, 2.28 miles, like that's so small what's the big deal? Well, this tribal community is very large and actually very close to a huge agricultural destination, agricultural dependent economy in Solvang. And when Solvang had a major outage, the entire town lost power. They were not able to do any transactions electronically. This is a community that is dependent on tourism and dependent on those transactions. So it was really, really quite significant. With this investment and additional investment by the tribe, they're building redundancies there so an outage like that would not affect both the tribe or the community of Solvang. So it's an integral piece. I like to say every mile counts. And those 2.2 miles count. So we will advise the full advisory committee when we have these events and really welcome your participation. And that concludes my remarks for today. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Hernandez. And I agree every mile counts. So thank you, Department of Technology, Mr. Martin Guzman, obviously Mr. Monroe, Ms. Hernandez and Ms. Shea. I'm going to go ahead and open it up to any of the committee members to see if you have any questions. All right, Michelle.

**Chief Deputy Director Perrault:** Yes, thank you. I appreciate the update. And I just wanted a little bit of a clarification when I'm looking at the miles, the permitting in process on one of the slides that talks about construction status for miles on Caltrans row that we're at 4,448. I recognize 305 of that total is Caltrans. Where's the remaining 3,000-ish? Is that off Caltrans row and so it's sitting doing something else or what?

**Mark Monroe:** Yes, yes. It's largely on a city and county owned land.

**Chief Deputy Director Perrault:** Okay. And so are those completed? What's the status of those? Are they in some form that's of variance of completion, pre-construction, you know.

**Mark Monroe:** Yeah, there's about a couple thousand of those miles that have gone to construction and about a little over a thousand are already complete. Okay. And so, yeah, that's just another, yeah.

**Chief Deputy Director Perrault:** I wonder in the future, because I think this table is really, really helpful. I wonder if in the future we can just add that because it sounds like those miles are in really good progress. So it'd be good to see those other miles so that we have the total of the 8,154 and have a little sense. So, it'd be good to take our progress wins when we can take them, right? So that'd be helpful.

**The Chair:** I just want to confirm, is this the deck in the Excel that you're looking for?

**Chief Deputy Director Perrault:** Yeah, see there's just a little bit of a gap. So, it kind of makes you go well what are those other 3000 doing, nothing? Since we know they are, we should have a sense of where they are.

**Mark Monroe:** Yeah, and I'm sorry, I might have gone too quickly, but if you go back to, Sam, if you could go back to slide eight. I think that's what you're looking for. So I apologize if I didn't go into that quite enough, but slide eight does, I think, what you're talking about. It kind of shows the 3,400 miles that are off of Caltrans right away, the 4,400 miles that are on Caltrans right away. Yeah.

**Chief Deputy Director Perrault:** I see it. I just, I think it'd be nice if it was all in one. That would be helpful. Thank you.

**Mark Monroe:** Absolutely. Yeah.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Michelle. Great suggestion. Any other comments? Yes, I see. Starkey, Supervisor Starkey.

**Supervisor Starkey:** Thank you so much. I appreciate the presentation. I've got super big concerns here with regard to all the miles that are still in the permitting process. And I'm curious to know at what point are we going to try



and streamline those so that we can get those permits approved. It seems that the majority of the MMBI partners, if I look at the one slide that you had just put up prior to this the last one with Vero, Arcadian, Lumen. Those are huge amounts of miles that need to get in the ground and they're still in the permitting process. So what are we doing? How are we working with Caltrans? What can we do to streamline those so these permits can get issued so we can get shovels and ground. Because we are quickly approaching December of 2026 when these funds need to be expended. So I would love to know how the California Department of Transportation facilitating Caltrans to get these encroachment permits approved.

**Mark Monroe:** Yes, thank you for that question, Supervisor Starkey. Yeah, so Caltrans will be presenting next and they're going to be talking through kind of their permitting process and what they've been doing. I will say that CDT has met with Caltrans with their partners and tried to facilitate those discussions. And so I think Caltrans will be talking more about their process next here.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Supervisor Starkey. I also have Assembly member Aguiar-Curry.

**Assembly member Aguiar-Curry:** Good morning. So I have quite a few questions and concerns. So I want to go back to something that has been brought up numerous times is, our plan. And there was supposed to be a project plan business plan completed by end of January. I understand it's not completed still. And I would like to know when it can be done because for me when I look at a plan and help move these projects along, I want to know what's the problem, how do you fix it and how do you implement it? And right now, I don't think we have those answers because we don't have the plan in front of us yet. I know it's been asked before, but since your conversations of last week, I was wondering by chance if we have a date or when we'll have that plan for the network.

**Mark Monroe:** Yes, and I'm sorry, we do not have a date for that yet. I know the report is being finalized and reviewed within the administration. But I don't have a hard date as to when that's going to be approved.

**Assembly member Aguiar-Curry:** So Mark, I'm going to just follow up where my colleagues are saying it's unacceptable. We need the plan. And if I want to give good information to my colleagues and to my constituents, I need the plan. And it's not like we didn't know about this for quite some time. So that is one thing that's really got me not really happy. And it was our intent four years ago when we started the project to ensure that the permits we're going to be

streamlined and expedited. And I can tell you right now, I don't see anything about this moving along very quickly. And when we have 3,000 miles complete from my stats I have in front of me basically, where we have 5,000 to go and unfortunately projects are not getting permitted as quickly as they should be. And every time it comes up when I'm looking at my stats, I have in front of me, again, they might be a couple weeks older but when I'm looking at that and we only have let's see, applications submitted 121, to be submitted 77, total needed for preliminary is 198, issued to date by Caltrans is only 13. It doesn't take a mathematician to look that we have a graph here that is missing a lot of encroachment permits and getting this done. So I'm just stymied because again, this is really unacceptable. We don't have a federal deadline. But that's not good news, obviously, because we've got to make sure we can afford to put more pressure. We don't want to put any more pressure on the general fund and we're trying to make sure things are affordable. And my hands are feeling really tied. I wish I was involved with this process way before. But now I'm here and I'm going to be a pain in someone's behind because it has to be taken care of. So we talked about it with other bills that we were going to make sure our urban and rural and tribal communities we're supposed to be prioritized. And I'm very concerned because they probably won't be able to make their connect to the last mile projects to the middle mile. And that's just really how far we're behind and it's frustrating. I can't take no for an answer. And I don't think my constituents want to take no for an answer. You know as well as I do in my rural communities, if there's the most important thing is access. And right now, affordability and access is top notch in the California State Assembly. And I feel like we've let people down. This is looking like other projects that we don't keep our hands on. And I'm just upset. So anyway, we need to see a whole lot of urgency. And I don't know what it's going to take if we have to go back to the governor to go back to the legislature, go back and have an oversight committee hearing, what it's going to do to get that plan out and we can continue to move forward. That's what I have for right now.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Assembly member Aguiar-Curry. Any other comments? Yes, Secretary Maduros.

**Secretary Maduros:** Thank you for that. And thank you for those remarks, Assembly member. I will say that I'm also new to my position, but we share your concerns at GovOps and within the administration about the progress of this. And want to make sure that we streamline this so that we can meet the deadlines. There's been a lot of attention on it. I've been in contact with Secretary of Transportation on this as well, and CDT and Caltrans are working together as well to try to address some of those issues, but your message has

been heard loud and clear, and we share your concerns and your sense of urgency on this. You have my commitment at least to continue to push and try to break through those barriers so that we can resolve this and start serving your constituents of whom I'm one and other Californians.

**Assembly member Aguiar-Curry:** If you don't mind me just piping in because my time is limited but you know we are trying to get approved encroachment right away permits. And they have a ton of requirements. And I know we're going to be talking to Caltrans in a minute. So I'm giving you a little heads up, Caltrans. We have, what, 12 districts I don't know if everybody talks to each other. And I will be the first to admit every part of the state is different. Every route is going to be different. We're not going to always be on the same plan, but we need to come together and make sure our partnerships are strong to make sure we get this out to the constituents. You know, when I hear that we're waiting months and months to get a right-of-way it's just frustrating as hell to me. And we all paint this rosy picture that everything's perfect. And I appreciate the statistics but even one that I have in front of me right now. I have it from 12/30/24 and I was just given it to on the screen and we're losing, it says Caltrans Construction, they have 779 miles in December. And now it's just shown on the screen that they only really have 777. Granted, it's only two miles, but we got to get our statistics right and people know where that's going. The lease partners, those numbers haven't changed since January, excuse me December 30, 2024. Joint build partners, that's gone up a whole seven miles as compared to what it was in 2024. And purchase partner, it's the exact same number as it was three or four months ago so I just feel like we're not making any progress. And so I think we really need to work on it. I mean, just because we have design and engineering it really has nothing to do with the actual fiber in the ground. I think we'll all agree with that. That's why I'm really concerned about how many ROW permits have been approved by Caltrans. I'm hoping there's more than what I have on my form right here. But yeah, I'm just frustrated. And if I hadn't been involved with Internet for All since 2014, I helped do the initial bill with Lena Gonzalez. And we still have so much more work to do and money's going to run out. They're going to come to ask us for the general fund, so we need to come up with a solution. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Assembly member. We have Supervisor Alejo.

**Supervisor Alejo:** Yeah, I think it's been well said by my colleagues, Supervisor Starkey and my former assembly colleague, Cecilia Aguiar-Curry. I share those same concerns. I think we got appointed on here to help monitor the progress. I served on this advisory committee for just over two years now, appointed by the speaker's office. But I think our role is to raise concerns not only on behalf of

our constituents and the people of California but certainly, to the governor's office and to the speaker and the Senate president. And to flag when we are seeing major concerns here because over the last two years at every hearing, we're painted a rosy picture that we are making progress but today is different than many other meetings. I know Assembly member Boerner raised concerns at our January meeting. But I think what's important is not to say we hear you or we're working on it, but I think here we are in the next quarter meeting, and I think all of us want to see how the problems are going to be addressed or they are being addressed and permits are being issued because those of us on the advisory committee, we're only limited to the information that were provided by staff or that we get from other sources or that we read out in the press. And I think it's true that when we get some of these slides if us or the public were to go to each one, you would think everything is great. Just going to the Arcadian deck showing that their goal is to build out 1,004 miles. The slide deck said the design and engineering has progressed from 70% to 90% complete, which would be 900 miles. Its estimated completion is Q4 of 2026. But I want to do a deeper dive into just them alone. Let's ask, and I'm going to ask these same questions to Caltrans. Out of all their permits how many have been completed, how many permits have been issued. From what I hear, 55 permits were submitted and 7 are complete after going through a really long process through environmental. But 0 permits through the Caltrans have been issued. That's a very different picture than what we see on this slide here. And what's more concerning is what has already been expressed as well. After this quarter, we only have 18 more months if we are to complete this by our goal of end of 2026, that doesn't leave very much time when we don't even have the permits yet to actually start construction and getting it complete over the next six quarters. So that is our concern. So my question to staff if funding is not completed or if the project is not completed by the end of 2026 are we at risk of losing those funds? Because under the current administration, any funds that we have now, if we're not meeting those requirements, I think they are truly at risk of having to be returned and not getting an extension. So that's the one concern. So the other question is, outside of Arcadian, how many of these other contractors have permits under Caltrans? What's the total number? How many have been issued and what is Caltrans timeline to get those issued right away? I think that's what we need to hear from Caltrans. How many have been pending? How many have been issued? And can we see within the next 15 to 30 days many of those getting out the door so that construction could happen at the earliest possible time. I think those specifics are helpful to the public, to the legislature and governor and to all of us as well. And then the last concern I would raise is what also been concerned is on the permitting. Many of these projects were supposed to be CEQA exempt. They're still going through a rigorous environmental review. And it was accurate. What I'm

hearing is that there's no uniform permitting process in the local Caltrans district offices. Each office has a different standard and there's many delays happening there and finger pointing from the state office to district office and vice versa. The other question is, Caltrans, do we have a uniform permitting process for these types of projects that are supposed to be CEQA exempt and streamlined. But we're not seeing that. And in many cases, some of those offices are requiring NEPA review just because they're on a highway where perhaps federal funds are being utilized or have been used. So that would be my other question, because I think we really need to get to the bottom of what is happening now. There isn't a rosy picture here for many of these projects. And we're at a point where we really need to see a change happen if we are going to really meet our goals and be able to report at the end of 2026 to the legislature, to the governor, and to the people of California that we got this work done. And we have a window of time to get it done. At our next meeting, we really will be at a point where it's going to be unrealistic to actually get it done in the timeframe that we set for ourselves years ago. So I hope our staff can give a report here and then also at the next presentation under Caltrans to actually get some specific responses from the Caltrans staff. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Supervisor. We'll have Mr. Monroe talk about the funding and then I know Caltrans's presentation is right after this and I know I want to give them an opportunity maybe to answer some of those questions that all you have and assembly members. So if that's okay, Mr. Monroe, if you'd like to answer the funding question about the claw back potential at the end of the 2026.

**Mark Monroe:** Yeah, absolutely. As I think we're all tracking, this was originally all federal funded. And it was to be under contract by the end of last year and to be spent by the end of 2026. The general fund that it's been swapped out with is actually available for contracting through the end of 2026. The funds will actually be available through the end of 2028. So it does give us more time to expend those funds. We're not planning on using that extra time. But we're not at risk of losing those funds. And I'll note that most of them are already under contract. By the end of this month, I think we should have all of the remaining funding under contract. So I don't think there's a risk of losing those. The risk really for us is not meeting the 2026 deadline.

**Supervisor Alejo:** Mr. Monroe, could you give your point of view on the permitting? How many are being issued? Obviously, there's a lot of interaction between your office and Caltrans. But we'd love to hear from your point of view on where do we stand on the permitting and getting those out the door

so that they could actually be groundbreakings to get these projects under construction?

**Mark Monroe:** Yeah, it's obvious we've been working since this project began to meet that 2026 deadline to really meet the needs of Californians. So we've been working towards that. We're now into this stage. It's a very quick project. It's a very large project, and we planned on really starting to go into full construction in 2025. So by several measures, we were ahead on some of those points, but we are at that point whereas you noted, we're going to need to get to move to construction with our partners very soon. And so this is a risk we're monitoring. I want to kind of defer any questions or defer the questions about Caltrans permitting process and kind of their numbers and what they've been able to go through to Caltrans. I think they're going to talk through that next. But it is a risk we're monitoring and we're aware of.

**Supervisor Alejo:** Mr. Monroe, just last follow-up. Obviously, Department of Technology staff is the lead on the oversight of the entire Middle Mile project. But do you know how many permits are pending under Caltrans. And how many have been issued. These are like basic questions we should be able to put on a slide and tell the public this is the progress being made at Caltrans as the lead agency on this project, do you have an answer to that?

**Mark Monroe:** I know that I've worked on it with Caltrans. Caltrans will be talking to you. They're actually going to answer those questions next here.

**Supervisor Alejo:** All right. Well, I just hope our staff can as we're tracking the progress on this design and engineering one of those slides for a future meeting include progress on the permitting under Caltrans and other projects on Caltrans rights-of-way. So if I could request that for moving forward because it's so urgent and this is the problem area that we get specific slide decks on the progress on the permitting itself. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Supervisor. Michelles also wants to respond from a finance perspective, I think, regarding the question you had on the financials.

**Chief Deputy Director Perrault:** Yeah, I know Caltrans is going to talk about the permitting, so I don't want to belabor this or put us off on time, but I did want to mention, and I appreciate the note of the swap out of general fund, which does obviously provide some flexibility should we need it. Hopefully we don't need it on the timing for the funds to be expended fully. The one thing I would request, and this is just something I think to note. Obviously, our full intent is that we are done by end of December 2026, right? That being said, I think it would

be helpful, and I'm sure maybe staff are already there, is to think about if for some reason there's an overrun on time then what's the impact maybe from like an inflationary perspective on cost. So it doesn't need to be done now, but I think as we're moving forward it would be helpful for finance and the administration to have an understanding if we need to make some adjustments. But I, again, do appreciate you noting the swap out and that it is general fund and not federal funds, because I know that that's a question we're getting across multiple spaces right now as it relates to the security of federal funding and loss of dollars. So just that one note. If staff could maybe tuck that in and think about it. With the intent that we won't need it.

**The Chair:** Thank you. All right. Chief Deputy Kever.

**Chief Deputy Director Kever:** Yeah, thank you. Mike Kever, Deputy Director at Caltrans. I just want it to be very clear that this is a very high priority for Caltrans. We meet regularly with CDT, regularly, meaning multiple times per week. These meetings go all the way up to the director's office, the chief engineer, and the deputy director for maintenance on operations. A lot of the questions that are being asked, I believe there will be a number of answers in the presentation to come. I can commit that we will continue to report on permitting. We'll continue to meet with the partners and look for opportunities to help them complete their applications so Caltrans can approve these encroachment permits and get everybody out in construction as soon as we can. I believe Mr. Karam, as he provides his presentation coming up, will provide more information on this but we are committed to not only what we're doing now but continuing to meet, collaborate, and find ways to move this program forward. You have our full commitment on that. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Michael. All right. Do I see.

**Assembly Member Aguiar-Curry:** Can I just, I just would like to make one comment, Michael. Thank you very much for that quick little blurb. I just want to just make a comment. On the front page of the website, Caltrans website says they can turn around a right-of-way encroachment within three days. So you may want to change that. Thank you.

**Chief Deputy Director Kever:** I believe we are committed to that. Thank you. We'll explain. It's not meant to be a flippant comment. We will explain that process and how we intend to turn these around quickly.

**The Chair:** All right. Thank you. We're going to go ahead and shift to the Caltrans update since there's a lot of questions in relation to the progress that's

been made. We have Elias Karam, who is going to be here to provide that update. Elias.

**Elias Karam:** Thank you. Good morning, Chair Bailey Crimmins, committee members, and others from the public. My name is Elias Karam. I am the Assistant Deputy Director over the Middle Mile Broadband Initiative for Caltrans. And I will be providing an update on the progress Caltrans is making in its work to support the middle mile broadband network. Next slide, please. Today, I will share our recent progress, highlight ongoing efforts, and outline the path forward. I will be covering two areas of Caltrans responsibility, the Caltrans build, and the issuance of encroachment permits for the CDT partner builds. Next slide, please. The first area of focus will be the Caltrans build. This includes the design and construction of 305 miles of the network on the state highway right-of-way and the design of 107 network hubs. I will note that at previous MMAC meetings, when we spoke of the December 2024 deadline, it was in reference to having the Caltrans build miles ready to construct. Next slide, please. This slide provides an overview of the Caltrans build. Given CDT's innovative approach to delivering the middle mile broadband network and their decision to leverage cost sharing joint builds, Caltrans is now delivering 305 miles. For these 305 miles, we have completed the pre-construction work, and they are ready to construct. More specifically, 207 miles are in construction and 80 miles have already completed construction. There are 18 miles in which you are leveraging Dig Smart Opportunities to add broadband infrastructure to state transportation projects. Next slide, please. The other area of responsibility for Caltrans is the design of the network hubs. Caltrans is responsible for the pre-construction work of 107 hubs. Which includes elements such as foundation reports and site plans. From this slide, you can see that of the 107 hubs, the last three hubs are undergoing quality review to ensure all site-specific information required to base the design on has been gathered. 46 hubs have entered the design process. And 58 hubs have complete designs and are ready to construct. Next slide, please. I would now like to shift to the Caltrans support of the CDT partner builds. And the issuance of encroachment permits. The CDT partners will now be constructing most of the network and for the segments on the state highway right away. That they will need an encroachment permit. An encroachment permit provides permission to enter the right-of-way and safely work on the state highway system. Next slide, please. While Caltrans follows a standard process for issuing encroachment permits. We have customized this process to meet the specific needs of the Middle Mile Broadband Network. The aim of this is to accommodate the partners, meet them where they are, and walk them through the process to meet all state and federal laws and requirements. To begin with, the applicants are considered a telecom utility, which eliminates the need for license agreements. Second, Caltrans is



accepting all MMBN applications regardless of how complete they might be. Which is unlike the standard encroachment permit process where all components are required to be included at the time of submittal. The components of an application include items such as project plans, environmental documentation. Right-way permits, environmental permits, and approvals. This allows the Caltrans team to work with their partners on their applications and to provide them with the support to complete the application, such as clarify requests and answer questions. Next slide, please.

The other aspect of this effort is the benefits established through SB 156 and the creation of the Middle Mile Broadband Network. The legislation established a statutory exemption for the California Environmental Quality Act, also known as CEQA, which CDT partners need to document in their application package. Additionally, as an outcome of the Caltrans build, Caltrans and CDT partnered with state resource agencies to develop streamlined approaches for permitting. Building upon this cooperation, Caltrans and CDT also worked with federal agencies such as the Bureau of Land Management and the US Forest Service. To foster communication and develop an efficient review and permitting process to expedite delivery. These programmatic approaches and environmental approvals and permits are available to the CDT partners. Which was shared in the July 2023 MMAC meeting and included in the joint bill guidance shared with CDT for their partners to use. Regardless of whether Caltrans or the CDT partners are constructing the network, the projects still need to meet all state and federal requirements. Next slide, please.

Ultimately, with the MMBN encroachment permit, we have modified our process knowing the importance of the effort and reflective of Caltrans commitment to the project. We recognize the need to support CDT partners more directly and help them to be successful. We refine the process to better serve their needs and pivoted to allow partners and Caltrans to work hand in hand. With that, I would like to move to the status of those encroachment permit applications. Next slide, please.

This slide provides an update on the encroachment permit applications Caltrans has received and their status, whether they be in application in review, encroachment permits issued, or encroachment permits closed. I will provide additional details on the definition of the status in the forthcoming slides. But I will first walk through the numbers associated with each status. As we have collaborated with CDT on the partner builds, CDT has indicated that they anticipate approximately 3,910 miles of MMBN infrastructure to be installed along the state highway system rights of way. So far, Caltrans has received a total of 1,195 miles of encroachment permit applications. Of this amount, the applications for 853 miles are in review. Encroachment permits have been issued for 326 miles. And for 16 miles, the work is complete, and the encroachment permit has been closed. The numbers presented today are from the Caltrans encroachment permit system

and establish a baseline data that will allow us to track and measure progress. While data was presented in January of this year, it was an estimate that reflected self-reporting by the CDT partners. Since then, Caltrans, CDT, and their partners have collaborated to leverage the Caltrans encroachment permit system. We appreciate this continued coordination. I would like to note that this data does not include previously permitted broadband projects for Digital 395, and TPN 299, which accounts for more than 530 miles. Next slide, please. Now I would like to walk you through the MMBN encroachment permit process and how the statuses on those previous slides align with the process. Next slide, please. The process begins with the CDT partner submitting their application and currently we have applications for 1,195 miles of the network. As I mentioned earlier in the presentation, we are accepting all MMBN applications, whether or not they might be complete. The MMBN encroachment permit process has been modified from the standard process where an application would need to be complete before being submitted. Next slide, please. Once received, as is the case with 853 miles, our team will review the application to verify the submitted components are complete. Which means they comply with all state and federal laws. Throughout the process, we maintain communications with the applicant. Next slide, please. Given that we are accepting all applications and meeting the applicants where they are, our teams review the included components to ensure they are complete and actionable by Caltrans. This means either the applicant is following up to ensure components are complete or Caltrans is reviewing to make sure that all state and federal laws and regulations are met. This diagram highlights the interactive nature of this process, which includes continuous coordination and communication between Caltrans and the CDT partners. Next slide, please. Once the Caltrans team has ensured the application components meet all state and federal laws. The application is deemed complete. Next slide, please. The next step after the application is deemed complete is to issue the encroachment permit. Based on the Caltrans system, encroachment permits have been issued for 326 miles of the network. Next slide, please. As these slides aim to demonstrate, we have modified our existing encroachment permit process with the goal of more directly supporting the partners through this effort. Next slide, please. This slide highlights examples of the direct support Caltrans is providing to CDT partners in our effort to be proactive and help them get to construction as quickly as possible. Each CDT partner has the opportunity to consult with Caltrans to coordinate ahead of submitting the application package. Caltrans established multiple lines of communication, such as a strike team that was created in February of 2024, which includes functional experts from construction, environmental, right-of-way design, and traffic operations with the objective to help resolve issues or challenges. Q&A sessions were held in January and February of this year to

hear the partner's concerns and address them in real time, as well as provide additional clarification. These forums allow us to provide clear direction and guidelines in an open setting. Where all of the partners can hear the information at the same time. We also have regular one-on-one meetings with each partner, both in headquarters and in the districts. What we have learned from these conversations is that even though the partners have worked with us previously, the uniqueness of the MMBN necessitated further clarification and additional details. As a result, we identified the need to share additional tools and resources to aid and support the partners. These include examples of environmental documentation and environmental checklist, and we have shared any studies and reports we have completed by Caltrans. This protection has significance for CDT partners like Hoopa Tribe. With whom we've been working with on their encroachment permit application. In fact, we expect their encroachment permit to be issued this month. Because of the importance of the middle mile broadband network, Caltrans is providing personalized assistance tailored to each partner and we have dedicated support to help them secure the encroachment permit that allows them to do their work on the state highway system. Caltrans remains committed to the success of this invaluable endeavor. That concludes the Caltrans update.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Karam. I would like to open it up to any of the members who would like to have comments, questions. All right, Supervisor Starkey.

**Supervisor Starkey:** Thank you so much. I guess this is going to be for Caltrans and probably CDT. But if they've only received 1,195 of applications for miles then where are we at with the other 2,700? I mean, that's concerning to me that those are not even in, especially with the 1,100 that are in and they're having all these barriers in front of them. So that's the question that is probably aimed more toward CDT to find out why we still not have those 2,700 in. Two, is for Caltrans, my understanding is every district is different with the different types of information and documents that the joint build partners need. How can Caltrans as a state facility, as a state entity, how can you help streamline this so that it's very consistent across the board. And I appreciate that you're having these meetings and you're opening yourself up and you have question and answers. But there still seems to be a lot of barriers in place for us to be able to move these projects forward. So my question is twofold. Number one is where are those 2,700 other miles. And then Caltrans, how can we streamline this so that it's very consistent across the board.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Supervisor. We'll go ahead and go ahead. Mr. Monroe, if you answer the first question.

**Mark Monroe:** Yes, absolutely. Yeah, broadly speaking, you're absolutely correct. Our partners are in the process of trying to enter the other 2,700 miles in. I'll let kind of defer to Caltrans a little more about this, but when we started, we signed with most of our partners back in 2023. And so there's something called the QMAP process. There're several different avenues that Caltrans has, and I'll let Caltrans speak more to that. So I think some of the partners and maybe in some of the districts, there was a different process that was used. As I understand it, the SEPS process that they're speaking to right now, that's something that on some level might have been updated. But at any rate, there's a new broader statewide direction, I believe, for all of the partners to go into that and so that's kind of where we are right now. And I'll say that from some of our conversations with our partners, there was a desire to let's get one all the way through and see what that looks like. And so that we can model everything on that before we go to the, it's a lot of work to kind of to do all of that work. They want to see what's going to work first. But I'll let Caltrans speak more to that.

**Supervisor Starkey:** Okay, well, just before we go to Caltrans for that, but at what point are we going to have the partners come before this committee and give their updates to hear what their struggles are? So as a suggestion that perhaps for the future, there's all these obstacles that are in place because of Caltrans and the permitting perhaps those partners need to come and talk to us directly to see how we can get this solved. So if Caltrans could answer the other question, thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Supervisor. Mr. Karam.

**Elias Karam:** Thank you. As we noted during the slides, we modified our typical encroachment permit process, and this allows us to keep this encroachment permit applications open with the agreement of the partner. As they're working through their environmental studies and completing the required documentation, which would include getting those approvals from those external agencies. So you asked also something about districts doing things differently and how are we ensuring consistency. I'll say every week we have a statewide meeting with all the Caltrans districts, we have MMBI coordinators, we have encroachment permit representatives, and we're coordinating regularly at least once a week. And additionally with additional meetings as needed through focus meetings with each district. So you are right. The nature of California is varied in its terrain. We have snow, we have deserts, we have everything in between. And each area has different concerns. But we're working with those partners and all of our Caltrans districts to make sure we're

building off those successes that we're having. And working towards streamlining those encroachment permit approvals.

**Supervisor Starkey:** So you anticipate just going with what Mr. Monroe had just said too is some of these joint builds are seeing what works and how to get it through. So you anticipate that we're going to be able to speed up this process from here on out.

**Elias Karam:** So I'll say we did request at the statewide summits that we had in January and February that all partners submit every encroachment permit so that we will be able to track the total scope of the miles. I still have that request. I still have not received it. But I understand that it does take a lot for them to determine where they're building and their impacts. And I don't know what the hesitation is but that's really for the partners to respond to. Some of the partners have submitted every single application. So I think they're in different states of submitting their applications. Again, as soon as they submit them, we know the scope and we're able to work with the magnitude of their work in each district and help them through the process.

**Supervisor Starkey:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Supervisor. Any other questions or comments? Oh, I do see Supervisor Alejo.

**Supervisor Alejo:** Yeah, I think the comments from my colleague are well taken. I agree with them completely. I think we need to hear from our actual partners, because I think we will see a completely different picture and hear from their frustrations. We could go down each one and hear what their perspective, their experiences have been. And I think it would be enlightening to see what's actually going wrong in the permitting process. This was presented as if it's a uniform process in Caltrans, but in real life, our partners are experiencing something different depending on each Caltrans district throughout the state. But I found the slides concerning, right. Because on the previous slide by Mr. Monroe, the slide that had MMBI construction progress, under Caltrans, under RFI squared it pointed that point it out that 3,016 miles were in the design, engineering, and permitting process. So that seems like a good amount under Caltrans was somehow moving forward, progress was happening. But then now when we hear the presentation by Caltrans and they tell us actually out of 3,910 miles, only 1,195 miles have been submitted for any type of permitting leaving permitting 70% of potential miles under Caltrans not even in a permitting process. So much less not going to be in a process to complete construction by the end of 2026. So these numbers show us what's real to get

completed and what is absolutely not going to get completed because there's not even permits submitted to be reviewed yet under Caltrans so that should be alarming to all of us. And even under those miles that are currently where permits have been submitted the 1,195 only 30% of those have been issued or closed. So that leaves us very far behind, even among those that have been submitted to Caltrans. So my question for Caltrans If they could respond to that is if that's concerning to you that 70% of the miles that are supposed to be under permit and have not been submitted yet. And to address only the 30% that have been issued or closed is that concerning to you in terms of getting the rest of the work accomplished? And then can we get a timeline today for the bulk of those 70% of the miles where permits have been submitted, will we get permits issued in the next 15 or 30 days? I think we need a short timeline to understand if Caltrans is going to make an effort here to get these permits issued sooner rather than later and what is the timeline for that?

**Elias Karam:** Thank you. It's a great opportunity to talk about why we go through this process and what is involved. First, there's been a lot of questions about NEPA. So the partners can benefit from the Caltrans NEPA assignment from FHWA. Nepa assignment streamlines the federal environmental review and approval process by eliminating FHWA's project-specific review and approval. As this relates to broadband projects, categorical exclusions are delegated to Caltrans. I'd also like to briefly discuss the value that is added to these projects by meeting the requirements of the state and federal laws. For example, the environmental process will identify areas in which tribal ceremonies may occur or if there are sacred areas adjacent to the state highway. Not all natural and historic resources are visible or apparent prior to conducting technical studies or consultations. These resources may be buried and not easily seen. Sites of important events and sacred places may lack obvious physical characteristics. All of the Caltrans projects were able to be designed to fully avoid and protect these resources. Most, if not all, of the CDT partner builds should be able to do the same. This is one example of the value added by going through this process. As Monica Hernandez just mentioned, the MMBM program is a complex infrastructure project traversing the entire state of California. This program has the potential to impact many more stakeholders than a typical project. This highlights the importance of completing these studies appropriately and timely before beginning construction. These projects are the partner's responsibility, and they must satisfy all state and federal laws before beginning construction. Caltrans has the expertise to support them through this process. Over the last few months, most of the partners have had significant progress by working with Caltrans and our subject matter experts towards satisfying these requirements.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Karam. Supervisor?

**Supervisor Alejo:** I didn't get any answers to any of the questions I did ask. And I get it. You recited some the process and the reasons why we have the environmental review and NEPA but to cite tribal and historic resources as a reason I mean, that's probably the exception rather than the rule in the bulk of these permits and areas of environmental review. But I had asked if it was concerning to Caltrans that only 30% have been issued so far and that the bulk of the miles under Caltrans jurisdiction have not even been submitted for a permit. Is that concerning to you at all?

**Elias Karam:** So these are the partners' projects and it's their responsibility to get them permitted. This is not a Caltrans responsibility. So they must complete this work to get their permit to make sure that they protect our natural resources.

**Supervisor Alejo:** Yeah, well, I'm trying to get to the point, here we are conveying to the public, like we're making progress that we're going to get all this construction done by the end of 2026. When 70% of the miles under Caltrans haven't even been submitted for an application so that's one piece. The second piece is among those that have been submitted, you've only issued or closed 30% of those, 70% are still in the process. There is a permanent application pending with the Caltrans district offices and what we're hearing from the partners is there's an unnecessary delay in the process despite these slides that you presented as some type of uniform expedited process, the reality there isn't. But I wanted to just ask out of the permits that have been submitted, the 1,195 miles, how are we going to get the 70% out the door to actually get a permit and what is the timeline for that? Are we going to see those permits issued in the next 15 to 30 days? Or do you expect a substantial continued delay on getting these permits out?

**Elias Karam:** I can't speak for the partners, but I can take those questions back to the team and CDT and work towards getting you a response.

**Supervisor Alejo:** My question was on Caltrans. Does Caltrans have a timeline to get these permits issued in the next 30 days?

**Elias Karam:** That's a partner responsibility. For them to supply the required documentation so that they can get their permit. Caltrans cannot issue the permit without them completing the work for their project. So there's no timelines set by Caltrans. Sorry.

**Supervisor Alejo:** Well, let me give you an example because the public and everybody in that room will not know. Let me just give one partner example if I can, and there's many that are reaching out and we're hearing from. But Arcadian has 55 permits pending with Caltrans. Seven have completed environmental review, 7 have been deemed completed environmental review by Caltrans, 0 permits have been issued. Even for those seven. Why is that?

**Elias Karam:** I don't know where you're getting that data from, but I'll take that question back to the team.

**Supervisor Alejo:** From the partner that's what I'm saying. If each partner could come and share their experience and where they stand we would get more facts about what's actually happening but here you have one partner with 55 permits pending, 7 deemed complete by Caltrans staff that means they went through all the environmental review already, but yet still don't have a permit, one permit in hand to start construction on those permits.

**Elias Karam:** So we have weekly meetings with the partner, and we discuss the outstanding items in their application in which they need to complete. So I'm unaware of these seven that you're making reference to, but we're helping each of the partners complete their applications required to get their permit.

**Supervisor Alejo:** Well, I would urge you to look into each of these because I just gave that as one example. I could go into others, CVIN, and many other partners that are facing the same frustrations, even when their work is deemed complete they still don't have a permit. And I think I just wanted to highlight that for all my colleagues who are part of the advisory committee that we're being given a rosy picture here, but when you actually dive deeper into what is going on, there's a completely different story that I think that needs to be highlighted here and needs to be fixed if we are to meet the goals that we set for ourselves. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Supervisor. And I've heard from several of our ex officio members that having our members maybe come up next session to be able to provide accomplishments that have been had. I mean, there's been a lot of accomplishments, but also to talk about any challenges and how that partnership is going. So we will be taking that back. In addition, I know, Mr. Karam, I know there's state permitting, but there's also federal permitting that with NEPA. And I know you can't always control the feds, but I think making sure that we have an all-inclusive view into the situation and how you are working with the federal government to streamline that as well would be very, very helpful for all of us. Yes, supervisor.



**Supervisor Alejo:** Madam Chair, I want to add one more thing. There were construction projects that whether it's new construction or that new fiber and cable being put into the ground but there's others where there's existing infrastructure. They're just adding fiber to the infrastructure that's already there. For example, there partner that has proposed projects in Monterey County but they're still going through the same process of not getting permits, even though they're only adding a fiber to where there's already existing other infrastructure. So it's not just new construction where there's existing infrastructure that they're also seeing significant delays. So I just wanted to delineate that the problem exists for both types.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Supervisor. I appreciate you clarifying that. I know CDT and Caltrans are committed to getting in the room. I know Caltrans has been meeting a lot with our partners. But making sure that we have a path forward and understand all challenges and that we have good mitigation. Californians are relying on all of us to synchronize, streamline, and do what's necessary to bring this network to fruition. And that is what the administration is committed to do. With that, is there any other conversation at the dais before we switched to GoldenStateNet as the next agenda item. All right. We have Eric Hunsinger, who's telling us how we're going to put all this network together and actually connect it to the network, the internet, correct, Eric?

**Eric Hunsinger:** Yes, thank you, Director Bailey Crimmins, and good morning community members. Next slide, please. So there is a significant portion of the network that is needed to tie all the parts and pieces together most of that is off Caltrans right of away. So we have some hub deployments. We've got about 21 hubs that are needed to be placed on alternative right-of-way locations. I want to point out that we've continued collaborating with tribal nations to place some of those key hubs in collaboration with some key tribes. Coyote Valley has made a commitment to CDT to establish a footprint. 29 Palms in addition to the hub is finding ways to reduce construction costs for some small portions of the network for CDT. We are going through the environmental walks on these locations. As well as establishing power commitments to make sure that the networks are running. Next slide, please. So, as discussed during the Caltrans portion, there's a number of partnerships that have been developed in the implementation of the MMBN. So to tie all those together is really important. So we've identified 171 segments needed to make sure that there is continuity throughout the network. Of those, we have a notice to proceed on about 78% of the network, meaning we have permits in hand and that we will be able to finalize the construction design and begin construction on those. We're still pending a few segments on optimizing plans

according to hub placement. As noted, we're seeking three hub locations via Cal Fire, and we haven't gotten permission for those hub locations. So we're trying to establish alternatives to those that would change the network design slightly, not significantly. So that's pretty much the delay in the rest of the permitting process for the off right away is establishing connectivity and parts and pieces that still need to be done. This is pretty simple and short. So if you have questions, I'm happy to answer.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Hunsinger. Any questions from any of my colleagues on the dais or online? So maybe I know not everyone in the public watches all of our sessions concurrently. Can you maybe just explain again the importance of the hubs and how this kind of brings it all together? I know we focus on the construction part but in order to actually get a household to the internet, there's some key elements that I just want to make sure that if they're just tuning in that they have that context to your presentation.

**Eric Hunsinger:** Absolutely. So, and I will say Caltrans is working on a significant number of the hubs as well, right, so that's a huge portion of the network. Our portion that is off Caltrans is like, I think, one fifth of the volume that they're doing. But the hubs are really part of making the network run. Fiber is an inert glass. It does not do anything until you put electronics on it and turn it up. So the hubs represent a location where CDT will be establishing a presence for their electrical equipment to actually turn the internet on and light the fiber. Without that light, you don't have the internet. So that's what they'll do is the hubs will transfer network back and forth between the hubs and ultimately connecting to the larger internet world in strategic locations that CDT has selected. And make it run for households at the edge. And these hubs will also be important for partnerships and customers that are buying on the network. So if there's a commercial entity or a community that needs to have connectivity back to somewhere else you can imagine Hoopa Valley Tribe may want to get connected to some larger area these hubs will establish that connection for them to create the connectivity that they desire and they want.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. Appreciate that. Any other questions on the dais? Oh, and Supervisor Starkey.

**Supervisor Starkey:** Thank you so much. My question is that you just mentioned that Caltrans has a number of hubs. Did I miss it? Did they highlight how many hubs that they are working on, sounds like you're working.

**Eric Hunsinger:** I believe I did see that.

**Supervisor Starkey:** Okay, I might have missed it.

**Elias Karam:** There's 107 hubs that Caltrans is responsible for designing and Caltrans is no longer responsible for constructing any of the hubs.

**Supervisor Starkey:** Who constructs them?

**Elias Karam:** That's a CDT question.

**Supervisor Starkey:** Okay, sorry.

**Mark Monroe:** Yes, we are including that in some of the other RFI Squared partnerships.

**Supervisor Starkey:** Okay, was it broken down at any point? Did I just miss it?

**Mark Monroe:** I don't know that we've talked through that component of it yet.

**Supervisor Starkey:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Supervisor. Any other questions? All right, we're going to go ahead and go ahead and go to Maria Ellis she is going to provide us an update from CPUC, all things last mile.

**Maria Ellis:** Good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to give this update. I realized that I am the last piece here standing between you and lunch. So this will be a very quick update. Next slide, please. So part of the CPUC mission is to deliver broadband programs that fund deployment of safe, reliable, and affordable broadband across the state. Especially in communities that lack broadband and essential service. To that end, this is a familiar slide that shows some of the programs that we administer, the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment Program known as BEAD, a federal program at 1.86 billion in total available funding. I'm going to give a different update on this in my last slide but just do want to note that the window for the BEAD program is now open, which is a different update than we had the last time that we were here together. And we will be continuing to accept both pre-qualification applications through April 24<sup>th</sup> and applications for projects into this program through May 2nd. The California Advanced Services Fund is a suite of programs of six programs that fund everything from adoption to infrastructure programs. This is one of our surcharges funded public purpose programs. And I do want to note here a change is that the usual deadline for applications to the broadband infrastructure grant account under the CASF is normally April 1st,

but the CPUC has moved this deadline to October 31st of this year. And the purpose for that move is to allow time for prospective applicants to leverage the federal funding that is currently available through the BEAD program. This will afford more time for applicants to maximize the substantial resources available through this program and also to reach as many eligible locations as possible. And then we have several other programs under that account that have a July 1st deadline coming up for applications. I'm going to skip over the loan loss that has been granted and fully awarded. I'm going to move on to the federal funding account which deploys last mile wireline technology. And this is an area where we partner closely with our partners at CDT. To help connect these awardees from this program to the middle mile if they're seeking backhaul. Real quick, if we move on to the next slide. I want to just share a couple of notes here. On February 20th, of this year, we officially closed our first round of federal funding account awards. Which the recommendation started rolling out back in June of 2024. And the CPUC continued to roll out recommendations on a two to three week basis. In summary, this is just a quick snapshot of where we landed with this program. On the round one, the commission approved 113 projects in 52 counties of the 58 counties across the state. The total of awarded projects is around 1.15 billion. And these projects combined will improve or benefit more or less 2 million people across the state and will deploy approximately 7,000 miles of fiber infrastructure in these last mile projects. 42 projects were awarded directly to public entities. So 7 counties, 16 cities, 8 joint power authorities, 11 rural cooperatives and 9 tribal nations received awards in this first round. So we've closed that round and now we have opened a limited expedited round two. This round is an opportunity to hit the 6 counties that did not receive an award in the first round of FFA. And so we're really targeting in on the counties of Calaveras, Contra Costa, Inyo, Monterey, Orange, and Trinity. And we're accepting applications now through May 29th or excuse me, April 29th. It's a short window. And we are aiming to, like I said, have this be an expedited window and aim to have recommendations start to roll out in late summer, early fall of this year. And I do want to note that the federal funding account has always been envisioned as a multi-year program, meaning that there would be multiple rounds of funding. So this is our second round and currently we only have appropriated by the state to this program, even though it's a \$2 billion program that was allocated for this. CPUC has only been appropriated around 1.45, about 100 of that was for technical assistance and state operations to deploy the program. And then we've already made 1.15 billion in awards leaving a little bit extra for permitting costs related to our grants, as well as doing the second round. The next portion of appropriations from the state is slated for the fiscal year in 27-28. So that's when we have an outstanding 550 million that could be used for this program if it is appropriated. Next slide. And my last slide. I don't expect anyone to really

be able to read this very well. It is outlining the schedule for the BEAD program. And I'm not going to dive into a lot of these details just to say that we understand that there is a lot of talk at the federal level about changing this program and changing the scope of this program. We at the CPUC have not been made aware of any formal guidance to that effect at this point. So from our end, we are continuing to implement this program full throttle. Our deadline to the federal government to submit what is called a final proposal. Which is our proposed subgrantee selection, more or less, which grantees we are proposing to fund. Is due to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration by October 2nd. We are still currently working towards that deadline again because we have not received any formal guidance to change our program, but we do understand that if and when that guidance comes, we as the state will have to take an opportunity to assess what impacts that has to both the program, where we're at in the schedule and possibly our timeline. And we will certainly keep folks informed about that actively. With that, that concludes my presentation here. And hopefully everybody has a great lunch.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Ellis. It's always great to see all the progress you were making at the last mile and for the federal funding account and across all things. I know you do BEAD and lots of efforts underway. Any questions from my colleagues on the dais or online? All right, Supervisor Alejo.

**Supervisor Alejo:** Yeah, thank you, Ms. Ellis, for the presentation. I had specific questions on FFA because Monterey County, of course, is one of those six counties that hasn't received any FFA funding. So I appreciate the timeline of April 15th through the 29<sup>th</sup> where this window is open. But I wasn't clear from round one, how much money has already been issued in round one and how much money is allocated to be issued in round two. If you could clarify that, please.

**Maria Ellis:** Absolutely. So round one, we awarded around 1.15 billion, excuse me, in grants to those projects across the state. As I mentioned previously. We've only been appropriated currently from the inception of SB 156, about 1.45 billion. 50 million of those went to local agency technical assistance grants, which were about 109 grants that were made across the state. And then in addition to that, there was about 51 million in state operations to stand up the program over the lifetime of the program to help it run. So that leaves, you know, again, these are approximate numbers because I'm not quick doing math in front of committees here on the spot, but around 200 million, more or less that we have available. I do want to note that the decision that adopted the rules for this program at the commission indicate an allocation for each

county. And that is an up to allocation, meaning that over the life of the program, over the several funding rounds, each county can receive funding up to that amount depending on if funding is available. So currently because we don't have all the appropriations available we cannot fund every single county up to their county allocation until 27-28. When hopefully we will see that appropriated to the state for the grant making.

**Supervisor Alejo:** So just to be clear for round two, you explained that there may be 200 million left of funds. Will all that be issued to grantees in round two or will only portion be issued in there and then will it be potentially a round three of funding?

**Maria Ellis:** I can't speak to that yet. I think we just need to see. In the first round we received 484 applications requesting 406 billion. And so there were lots of applications and choices had to be made. And so we are aiming to only fund the applications that have the best fit with the program that best reflect the needs on the ground in terms of unserved locations. And so while that is what is available, I can't commit that that's the full length, the highest level of funding that we will provide. Just depends on how many applications are coming in for how much and after the evaluation what's left. But our commitment is to fund in every single one of these counties in this round because we really want to see at the end of this, having every county have had an award, at least one.

**Supervisor Alejo:** Great. And that's music to my ears. I want to thank you for that. Certainly, a lot of work has been done in our county. We were one of the first advocating for this funding to begin with to expand broadband. Even proposed a bond even had SB 156, we were trying to get a bond to address this. But the reason I bring that up in places like Monterey County and also in the other counties that haven't received any FFA funding, some of our counties have done work to really target the disadvantaged communities. Here in Monterey County, I think we were the first or the second JPA formed just on broadband and that was led by my colleague supervisor Chris Lopez. But that project alone is focused on Farmworker communities, Latino communities in South Monterey County, places like San Ardos, San Lucas, really small rural areas that would really benefit from this program. So I hope not only looking at the counties that haven't received funding but also looking at where the efforts have been targeted by local governments to actually extend broadband to communities that just haven't had it in any of the previous years. And that the work is sitting on the table there just waiting to get funding to carry out those goals that we all talk about here through MMBI. So I just wanted to speak to that. And I hope that that some of those funds will certainly come to the six remaining counties in this next round as you articulate. Thank you.

**Maria Ellis:** And Supervisor, I just do want to mention that since the time we ended the first round and before opening the second round our broadband caseworker team has been really actively working and reaching out to stakeholders in each of those counties, prospective applicants to help them prepare and help them understand the resources. And we really want to see people in communities be successful in this grant round.

**Supervisor Alejo:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you. Are there any other questions or comments from any colleagues on the dais? All right, I don't see any, so we're going to go ahead and move to public comment. So Ms. Alvarado, if you please provide the public comment guidelines to begin the public comment process.

**Alicia Alvarado:** Thank you, Chair Bailey Crimmins. In order to ensure everyone who wishes to make public comment has the opportunity to do so. We respectfully request one person per entity and two minutes per person. The order of public comment will be online public comment submissions prior to the meeting, Zoom hands raised, and phone hands raised via star nine. We have not received any emailed comments submissions prior to our meeting. So we will start with public comment in the room and then via Zoom.

**Paula Treat:** Madam Chair, members of the committee, I always get to be the bad person, but that's okay. I'm Paula Treat. My clients are CVIN VAST, and I've represented tribes for over 30 years. So as partners to Caltrans and CDT I want you to know that CDT has not been the major problem for the partners. It has been Caltrans. And I think it has a lot to do with each district deciding what the rules are going to be versus one model that we can all follow. And I'll tell you that for my client and other clients I've talked to, they didn't submit applications because they were discouraged until all the information that district wanted was presented. And there are cases where we have put in applications that they've been accepted for Roe and then they've been pulled back. Because there were more things that needed to be done after we had acceptance. So I'll tell you that it's very frustrating on the tribal side. Because tribes have been one of the least afforded groups to have broadband access, yet alone fiber. We've had situations where tribal members would have to drive their kids to the local 7-Eleven just to pull down their homework. Because there was no tribal access and without Middle Mile, you don't get last mile. So it's very frustrating. I would say that there are ways to streamline this. I think some of them were pointed out in 156. There's a CEQA exemption. So the fact that there would be any CEQA backlog is beyond me. And most of these aren't NEPA. And you'll

find that a good portion of the right-of-way areas is already existing line where you need to pull new fiber. But very little disturbance. And disturbance, especially to cultural areas, as I've represented tribes the damage is already done. They're going back in and re-putting in line that needs to be done to get us middle mile to last mile. And meetings every week don't mean much if we can't get permits. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Are there any other public comments in the room? Miss Alvarado, is there anybody online?

**Alicia Alvarado:** Yes. Dr. Larry Ozeron.

**Dr. Larry Ozeron:** Can you hear me okay?

**Alicia Alvarado:** Yes.

**Dr. Larry Ozeron:** Well, good morning committee members, and thank you for making time for public comment. I'm Dr. Larry Ozeron, a retired surgeon. Now focus on health technology. I view broadband as critical infrastructure to health, especially in rural communities where health services can be limited. And long travel times are needed to get some types of care. Telehealth helps to fill the care gap that these communities suffer relative to larger ones. This committee exists because we're benefiting from an unprecedented opportunity to enable every California to have access to broadband and telehealth. I heard a lot of progress reported on this call, but I also heard several concerns expressed and to those concerns, I would add that the most rural communities within existing health gap may see that health gap grow if they're left out of this opportunity. I don't see us connecting those communities anytime in the near future if we don't do it now. And I've testified on this concern a few times. I've suggested that we need to add private funds to our efforts to ensure that we have adequate funding to actually achieve broadband for all. Excuse me. It seems to me that we can leverage the huge value to ISPs of these billions of dollars of infrastructure. I didn't hear anything about it, so I have to ask, are we leveraging that value to require ISPs to serve every community? Consider that there are likely multi-billion dollar opportunities for ISPs in several large communities in the state like LA or San Francisco. What would it take to require ISPs wanting to service those communities using the middle mile infrastructure to serve several smaller communities in the last mile. We could follow models we've used in other contexts like Medi-Cal coverage to ensure no one is left out. Statewide access is needed for the broadband equity that we claim we want. The negotiating strength we have a state is lost if we leave each community to fend for themselves. Are we contractually



requiring ISPs accessing the middle mile to serve several small, costly, and possibly unprofitable communities subsidized by their profits in large communities. And if not, why not? I ask you to consider what approach you'll implement to ensure that we actually achieve broadband for all. Thank you.

**Alicia Alvarado:** Thank you. Next, we have Lindsay Skolnick. Please unmute.

**Lindsay Skolnick:** Sorry about that. Good morning, members of the committee. My name is Lindsay Skolnick. I'm here speaking on behalf of the California Alliance for Digital Equity, also known as CADE. We understand CDT is in the process of sharing the MMBI's cost structure with potential FFA customers. And that structure outlines price caps as you mentioned in your presentation today. As that cost structure is finalized, we strongly encourage CDT to do all that they can to ensure FFA grant recipients that intend to connect to their projects to the MMBI are not priced out. Many FFA grantees are building their projects in areas deemed uneconomic by most internet service providers and often serve low income or disadvantaged communities. For those projects to be successful and sustainable, it is critical that the MMBI connectivity remains affordable. In the spirit of transparency, we also ask that CDT shares more details about its plans to maintain MMBI affordability for FFA recipients as well as the data-driven research that went into developing the price caps, ideally at the next stakeholder meeting on May 2nd. Thank you very much for your consideration of my comments.

**Alicia Alvarado:** Thank you, Ms. Skolnick. Next, we have Patrick Messac.

**Patrick Messac:** Good morning, Middle Mile Council members and state partners. My name is Patrick, and I am the director of Oakland Undivided. The CDT team has made commendable progress to achieve major installation milestones throughout our region. I'd like to thank Mackenzie and her team for their responsiveness and ongoing support to actualize this incredible project. I appreciate that most of this meeting's focus was on the completion of the network. But on the demand side, if no one can afford to access the network, we're just talking about a bunch of buried glass. This body needs to answer a fundamental question about our values. Is the purpose of the Middle Mile Network to replicate the prohibitive cost of the private market and to generate windfall profits. Or will the network be priced to foster competition and enable FFA last mile projects? We appreciate that this MMBN needs to be self-sufficient. But we must be careful not to price out the very use cases this project was intended to serve. Importantly, many FFA projects are building infrastructure in communities that encumber internet service providers have overlooked for decades. In these areas, the municipalities and community-

oriented providers building out with FFA are relying on CDT to set affordable MMBN rates so that they can deliver low or no cost service to Californians long after FFA dollars are fully expended. I hope that the council members will join FFA recipients and your constituents in calling for the CDT to price backhaul affordably. Especially in our highest poverty, least connected urban, rural, and tribal communities. This time must be different. Thank you for your time and consideration.

**Alicia Alvarado:** That will conclude public comment.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mrs. Alvarado. Thank you for the public that we're willing to make comment. I also want to give an opportunity to my esteemed colleagues to see if there's any comments before we go into closing. All right, Mr. Keever.

**Michael Keever:** Yeah, thank you. Certainly, a lot of the conversation today has been about Caltrans, Caltrans role. I just want to speak to that. We hear you loud and clear, just like we do after every meeting. We'll go back and we'll look at the comments that we received here. We also will continue to look at the comments we receive in between these meetings and look for ways that we can work together to deliver this important program. I want to provide a little bit of perspective but Caltrans specific concerns when it comes to these encroachment permits have to do with things like the traffic management plan, the safety plan, keeping those that are out there safe and the public safe. As well as the design to make sure that we're protecting the assets that are out there, right. Nobody wants to trench through an existing culvert. Most of the concerns, as I understand them, have to do with the federal and state permits and what it requires to be compliant with those. Of course, I think it goes without saying, want to be good stewards of the environment. It's the right thing to do. It's also we're looking to be in compliance with the law. So what does that take? And there's been a lot of discussion on that. Where do we go? How far do we have to go? But I also want to point out there's a risk and we're seeing some of that now when some of the resource permitting agencies, as they have, come back and say we're not sure you're compliant with our master agreements that we negotiated with you. And we want to remind you, if you aren't compliant, we have the right to withdraw that master agreement. Which would create a huge risk for all of us in completing this network. So Caltrans finds itself, as we do sometimes, it's not our favorite role, as the middle broker trying to find that path forward that can help make everybody successful and fulfill all of these objectives that we have. So I just want to ask all of us to do our best to try to work together and to thread that needle and find that path and make this successful. We are very open to ideas. I will say, Ms. Treat, if there's

any risk that I see on the Caltrans end, it does have to do with we've changed the process. We have people that are very familiar with the old process. And changing process with 12 districts and trying to get consistency is an area that we need to continue to work on. And you have my assurance we will continue to do what we can. To create that consistency. But I do appreciate everybody collaborating on this, as has been said during public comment. This is a vitally important program. And once again, we're committed to working with all of you to complete it. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Michael. Before we go into closing, we mentioned that we had heard a lot about partners and potentially having them come in July. What I'd like to propose for discussion with our colleagues is continue to have our July 18th, our typical check-in with all the public. But because of this interest, I'd like to propose for discussion and for consideration the ability to actually have an ad hoc MMAC. So we would potentially just focus on the RFI Square partners. The progress that they're making and be able to highlight that. So I'd like to open that up for discussion to see if anybody has thoughts about that or if they would prefer just to wait and push it to the July. I just am concerned that July is a little farther away and I know there's a lot of interest. Any discussion? All right. I have Supervisor Alejo.

**Supervisor Alejo:** I would just weigh in. I think it merits our attention and focus at this time so to do an extra meeting focused on that, I would be supportive of it. At these meetings, we go and give updates but if we don't focus and have a more detailed conversation about this it'll only invite the legislature to hold a hearing focused on the concerns that we raised here today. And because at this point, I think it merits the attention of the legislature and the governor and certainly for us. But I would expect that that's likely to come at this point, if there's holdups, I think the legislature is going to ask Caltrans those more detailed questions in an informational hearing about why we are currently in the position that we're in. And what are those delays in the 12 Caltrans district offices. But from my part, I would certainly join you in person Madam Chair, if you call for such a meeting.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Supervisor Alejo. Any other colleagues that like to discuss the item?

**Supervisor Starkey:** I would just concur as well that an ad hoc might be the appropriate step to take so that we can dive a little deeper into what the particular issues could be and how Caltrans is addressing them and the issues that Caltrans have with the joint builds so that we could perhaps facilitate this quicker.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Supervisor Starkey. Any other discussion on the proposal? All right. We will have a May, I don't want to pull the date out of my hand. So we will be obviously with Bagley Keene, we'll be giving everyone notice. We'll work with all the members and also RFI Square partners and the focus will be on the partners. Again, there's been a lot of great progress, but I think we want to all hear how things are going. I also just want to thank everyone on the committee the presenters, the attendees. We are all striving for broadband for all, there's difficult challenges, but that doesn't mean that we don't break through the challenges to do what's right on behalf of Californians. So we will have a May meeting with a date coming. Our next Typical meeting will be Friday, July 18<sup>th</sup> from 10 to 12. And with that, I'd like to adjourn today's April 2025 MMAC meeting. Thank you very much.