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Attachments:

1. [Map of priority last-mile broadband areas and State of California middle mile network in Santa Barbara County](#)
2. [Staff Report to SBCAG North County Subregional Planning Committee on the completion of the grant including presentation materials](#)
3. [Photos of State of California middle mile broadband in construction in Santa Barbara County and community meetings on broadband in Santa Maria and Guadalupe](#) (photos captioned once downloaded) – download code: 7221

Broadband Projects Ready in Nine Rural Santa Barbara County Communities

State-funded effort establishes regional broadband authority, completes last-mile designs, and finalizes environmental review for future high-speed internet projects.

SANTA BARBARA, CALIF – High-speed internet projects are one step closer to reality in nine rural Santa Barbara County communities following the completion of broadband designs and environmental review funded through a state grant.

The work, completed by the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG) in partnership with the County of Santa Barbara, achieved three major milestones supported by state funding: establishing a regional joint powers authority for broadband, finalizing last-mile network designs for priority areas, including nine communities identified in the Santa Barbara County Broadband Strategic Plan and over 150 community anchor institutions in the county. Lastly, a programmatic environmental impact report was completed for those proposed last mile broadband installations countywide.

This effort helps streamline future broadband construction by public or private providers. The environmental review covers common installation methods such as buried fiber, aerial cables, and satellite service.

“The goal is to streamline the process for local governments or internet providers to deliver broadband projects and bring reliable high-speed internet to areas in the county that need it most,” said Fred Luna, director of project delivery and construction for SBCAG. “We’ve done some of the groundwork to kickstart these projects with the last mile designs and the countywide environmental analysis under the California Environmental Quality Act. We look forward to continuing work through future funding opportunities and partnerships.”

The nine last mile priority areas identified and designed under the grant in phases include:

- **Phase 1:** Guadalupe, Cuyama/New Cuyama, Casmalia, Los Alamos
- **Phase 2:** Los Olivos, Jonata Park, areas east of Santa Maria, Refugio Canyon, and the West Highway 246 corridor

These locations were prioritized based on limited existing service and rural status, as outlined in the 2022 Santa Barbara County Broadband Strategic Plan, which included extensive public input.

All nine areas are ready for implementation as open-access, last-mile fiber networks. Construction, however, remains unfunded. SBCAG and the County submitted a competitive grant application for the Phase 1 areas through the state’s Last-Mile Federal Funding Account in 2023, funding for the program has been delayed in the state budget and awards have not yet been announced.

“We’ve done the planning, engineering, and environmental work, now we’re prepared to begin construction as soon as funding becomes available,” said Brittany Odermann, Deputy County Executive Officer for the County of Santa Barbara. “These nine areas are ready for construction and represent some of the most underserved parts of our region. With the state’s support, we can close the digital divide for these communities.”

In tandem with the design and environmental work, the SBCAG Board of Directors amended its Joint Powers Authority agreement to formally include regional broadband planning and implementation responsibilities.

While last-mile connections deliver internet directly to homes, businesses, and institutions, middle-mile infrastructure acts as the high-speed backbone that links communities to the broader internet. SBCAG's planning work is designed to align with the state's Middle Mile Network so that local projects will be ready to connect when the system comes online.

SBCAG continues to coordinate with the California Department of Technology as the state constructs 190 miles of middle-mile broadband infrastructure throughout Santa Barbara County. Construction is underway on approximately 105 miles of the planned network. This includes segments along the coastal rail corridor near Vandenberg Space Force Base, Lompoc, and the Gaviota Coast, with additional buildout planned along Highway 166 through Cuyama and the communities of Santa Maria, Orcutt, and toward Santa Ynez. The Middle Mile Network is expected to be completed in the region by the end of 2026.

Future work will depend on new funding opportunities. SBCAG and the County continue to advocate for the state to maintain its commitment to broadband expansion and to allocate Santa Barbara County's full share of the Last-Mile Federal Funding Account. SBCAG is also advocating for expanded federal eligibility for broadband projects under transportation and infrastructure programs.

The last-mile design and environmental work was made possible through a \$1 million Local Agency Technical Assistance (LATA) grant awarded by the California Public Utilities Commission to the County of Santa Barbara in 2023. SBCAG implemented the grant in partnership with the County. The LATA program is part of the state's broader effort to expand digital access and support local agencies in preparing for broadband infrastructure investments. The completed designs and [environmental documentation](#) can now be used by local governments or internet service providers to streamline permitting and advance future broadband construction.

For more information on regional broadband efforts or to access technical documents completed under the Local Agency Technical Assistance (LATA) grant, visit www.sbcag.org or contact SBCAG by phone at (805) 600-4477 or email at info@sbacg.org.

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