

COUNTY OF SONOMA

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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October 19, 2012

Tom West, Manager
Cathy Emerson, Co-Manager
Northeastern and Upstate CA Connect Consortia

RE: Letter of Support – GBB LLC NCRMMI Infrastructure Project

Dear Mr. West and Ms. Emerson:

On behalf of the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors, please accept this letter as our endorsement of the Golden Bear Broadband (GBB) LLC's Northern California Regional Middle Mile Infrastructure (NCRMMI) broadband infrastructure project. We support GBB pursuing grant funding from the California Advanced Services Fund (CASF) and a matching investment to help underwrite the capital cost of deployment. Deployment of broadband in rural communities is one of our Board's top priorities and is a critical investment in Northern California. The Board has been a strong proponent of broadband deployment since it adopted the Sonoma County Economic Develop Strategy and Jobs Plan in 2011.

The NCRMMI will interconnect Sonoma County with fifteen other northern California counties via a redundant, multi-loop, fiber-based network infrastructure. With grant funding from California Advanced Services Fund and a matching investment, this project will enhance and strengthen today's broadband infrastructure and provide connectivity to meet escalating demand. Such increased service capacity (backhaul and last-mile) makes broadband services available, accessible and affordable, opening up choices for remote communities while preserving the north state's rural way of life.

The north state's total population is 1.634 million people and total land area is 43,298 square miles, or 27.76% of the state's geography. Agriculture and tourism are the top two industries in the region. As a stakeholder in this project Sonoma County has a population of 483,878 distributed across 1,575 square miles and is both urban and rural. Citizens deserve quality broadband services throughout this part of California. Due to a lack of broadband, we see:

- First responder requests for medical emergencies along rural roads are slow because of the lack of either cell or text services.
- The Kashia Pomo Tribe operates a school served by a slow, copper based T-1 line as broadband connectivity does not extend to their nearby homes and students cannot complete assignments requiring internet access;

- Senior citizens in rural areas are required to drive to schools or libraries to access web based basic social services;
- Agricultural businesses have difficulty filing required electronic government reports;
- Economic development efforts requiring marketing and promotion are blocked due to inadequate broadband services;
- Tourist related industries suffer without connectivity for bookings and vacationer requests.

Increased availability to high speed internet services will support e-commerce, on-line distance education, telemedicine, and social networking, all of which connect our residents and communities. Without broadband, the following occurs:

- Unserved and underserved areas are disenfranchised and students face increasing educational disadvantages because they are *lack* access to high speed internet services away from school.
- Schools lose funding due to the decrease in student populations as families leave the northern counties in search of “lit” communities;
- Businesses, recreation and tourism cannot survive without modern websites, social media, and virtual information;
- 35 of the 111 federally recognized Native American Tribal Communities reside in the 16 northern counties are denied the business attraction broadband provides and educational access is diminished;
- Libraries continue to remain dependent on print media, rather than transitioning to virtual information;
- Rural health clinics lack access to telemedicine support and critical care experts putting rural communities severe risk of isolation;

The GBB will implement a comprehensive plan for deployment leveraging existing infrastructure and deploying new infrastructure forming a diverse and redundant, multi-loop, fiber-based network throughout all of northern California. Without CASF funding, the cost of building needed broadband infrastructure for these economically and geographically challenged communities will not happen, excluding 1.634 million people from access.

While fiber to the home is an unrealistic expectation for the hardest to reach, rural remote areas, upgrading the existing networks to provide a fiber-based backbone to support fixed and mobile wireless networks makes good sense.

On behalf of the County of Sonoma Board of Supervisors, I endorse the Golden Bear Broadband, LLC, NCRMMI application for infrastructure funds, and strongly encourage CASF/CPUC do the same.

Sincerely,



SHIRLEE ZANE,
Chair and Third District Supervisor
Sonoma County Board of Supervisors