



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 22-1244, **Version:** 1

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Chief Administrative Office and Planning and Building Department, Economic Development Division, recommending the Board:

- 1) Accept a grant award from the Economic Development Administration (EDA) in the amount of \$3,782,433 in CARES Act Funds for the term of June 28, 2022 through June 28, 2027; and
- 2) Delegate authority to the Chief Administrative Officer or the Assistant CAO to execute the Grant Agreement and all grant-related documents including, but not limited to, amendments, requests for payment, reports, and all associated documents necessary to secure and expend grant funds for the purpose of implementing the approved Middle-Mile Fiber Optic Project grant program.

**FUNDING:** CARES Act Funds / Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) Funds.

### **DISCUSSION / BACKGROUND**

On September 1, 2015 (File No. 15-1020, Item No. 27), following a presentation on the state of Broadband infrastructure in the County, the Board established a Broadband Technical Advisory Committee (Committee) to work on broadband issues and appointed two (2) Board members to serve on that Committee.

On January 12, 2016 (File No. 16-0006, V1, Item No. 5), the Board adopted Resolution 013-2016, which approved the submittal of an application for an EDA Planning Program and Local Technical Assistance Program Grant to complete a Broadband feasibility study.

On September 27, 2016 (File No. 16-0006, V2, Item No. 25), the Board authorized acceptance of a \$75,000 grant award from the EDA Planning Program and Local Technical Assistance Program to conduct a Broadband feasibility study in the County and committed \$75,000 for the 50% County match required by the grant. The previously approved Resolution 013-2016 states that improved Broadband service fits strongly within the County's Economic Development Strategic Plan and that building Broadband capacity in the County is "a way to create and retain jobs, educate and retain students, and position the County in the 21st-century economy."

A technical advisory group was also formed to assist with technical expertise in the area of Broadband policy and infrastructure. This group included members from non-profit organizations with special interests in Broadband technology and stakeholder community members.

On January 3, 2017, the Chief Administrative Office, Procurement and Contracts Division, issued Request for Proposals (RFP) 17-918-031 for a Broadband Needs Assessment and Feasibility Study. Following the closure of this RFP, a team consisting of one (1) Board Supervisor, two (2) County staff, and three (3) community members evaluated the RFP responses and a qualified proposer was identified. On April 25, 2017 (File No. 17-0442, Item No. 5), the Board approved the award of RFP 17-918-031 to NEO Fiber, Inc., doing business as Neo Connect, a Colorado-based consulting firm specializing in broadband planning and analysis, authorized the Chief Administrative Officer to negotiate an agreement with Neo Connect, and also authorized the Purchasing Agent to execute that

agreement. On September 20, 2017, the Purchasing Agent executed Agreement 248 with Neo Connect, with a not-to-exceed amount of \$126,000 and a term of one (1) year.

On January 23, 2018 (File No. 18-0077, Item No. 37), the Board received a presentation from Neo Connect regarding a summary of their efforts so far, including the current broadband environment and infrastructure in the County, and results of surveys and community engagement. Neo Connect's presentation also included examples of policies and ordinances that facilitate broadband deployment, such as "dig once" or "shadow conduit" policies.

On June 30, 2020 (File No. 20-0835, Item No. 37), at the request of the Committee, the Board provided direction to staff to work with Neo Connect to apply for a grant from the EDA. This specific EDA grant is for services related to the design, engineering, and construction of Broadband for priority areas within the County, using designated TOT funds of \$450,000 as the 10% County match. This grant allows for the funding of a project up to \$4.5 million.

On June 28, 2022, after several rounds of review and supplemental environmental and cultural reports, the County was officially notified by EDA of the successful grant award in the amount requested of \$3,782,433. The awarded grant funds will be utilized to complete the Middle-Mile Fiber Optic Project, a project that will install middle-mile fiber optic infrastructure within the three (3) County project areas of Cool, Garden Valley, and Georgetown to address the lack of connectivity for Internet and Broadband access. This project includes design and engineering services as well as the installation of approximately 13 miles of underground fiber optic conduit along existing roadways to provide middle-mile broadband service to these communities. Including the County's required ten percent (10%) match commitment of \$420,270, the total Project cost is \$4,202,703. Upon the Board's acceptance of this grant award and the execution of the Grant Agreement, staff will conduct project kickoff meetings with EDA and other County stakeholders, and also begin the process to secure the initial design and engineering contract in order to initiate the project.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

The Board may choose to not to accept these grant funds. This would result in the forfeiture of the available grant funds awarded to the County under this grant program. This funding opportunity provides for critical Broadband infrastructure to be placed in the undeserved areas of Cool, Garden Valley and Georgetown.

## **PRIOR BOARD ACTION**

See Discussion/Background above.

## **OTHER DEPARTMENT / AGENCY INVOLVEMENT**

Chief Administrative Office

## **CAO RECOMMENDATION / COMMENTS**

Approve as recommended

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

There is no change to Net County Cost associated with this item. As previously approved by the Board, TOT reserve funds in the amount of up to \$450,000 have been designated to fund the

County's grant match requirement for this EDA grant. Anticipated funding and expenses for this grant project will be included in the Fiscal Year 2022-23 Adopted Budget, and will also be included in subsequent years' budgets accordingly for the remainder of the grant term.

**CLERK OF THE BOARD FOLLOW UP ACTIONS**

N/A

**STRATEGIC PLAN COMPONENT**

Economic Development- Invest in Infrastructure needs to improve and maintain competitiveness  
Good Governance-Infrastructure

**CONTACT**

Kyle Zimbelman, Economic and Business Relations Manager  
Planning and Building Department