



Legislation Text

File #: 24-0413, **Version:** 1

Chief Administrative Office, on behalf of the Broadband Ad Hoc Committee, recommending the Board:

- 1) Rename the Broadband Ad Hoc Committee to the Broadband and Connectivity Ad Hoc Committee; and
- 2) Approve and authorize the Chair to sign and submit a letter of opposition to the California Public Utility Commission regarding AT&T's application for relief from its Carrier of Last Resort Obligation.

FUNDING: N/A

DISCUSSION / BACKGROUND

On September 1, 2015, with Legistar item 15-1020, following a presentation on the state of Broadband infrastructure in the County, the Board established a Broadband Technical Advisory Committee to work on broadband issues and appointed two Board members to that Ad Hoc Committee. On January 23, 2018, with Legistar item 18-0077, the Ad Hoc Broadband Technical Advisory Committee was dissolved, and a new Ad Hoc Committee was formed to focus solely on the Broadband Feasibility Study with the appointment of the same two Board members to the new Ad Hoc Committee.

This item would rename the Ad Hoc Committee from the Broadband Ad Hoc Committee to the Broadband and Connectivity Ad Hoc Committee to expand the subject matter to connectivity generally in order to address connectivity issues along with Broadband challenges.

AT&T is a Carrier of Last Resort (COLR) and, thereby, required to provide "Plain Old Telephone Service," also known as POTS or landline phone service, upon request to all residential and business customers. POTS has a uniform set of minimum service standards and regulations that does not extend to new technologies that provide similar service, such as wireline Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP). While it is not unusual for one company to replace another as a COLR, AT&T is requesting permission from the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) to abandon its COLR obligation without finding a replacement.

If approved by the CPUC, over 580,000 affected AT&T customers would be left with fewer options in terms of choice, quality, and affordability. Alternative services, such as VoIP and wireless, have no obligation to serve a customer or to provide equivalent services to AT&T landline customers, including no obligation to provide reliable access to 9-1-1 or LifeLine program discounts. In El Dorado County, AT&T's request would affect 15 census-designated places including incorporated jurisdictions and unincorporated communities.

The Letter of Opposition attached describes how important reliable landline services are to residents and businesses that do not have other affordable options available for connectivity. It is essential to rural communities to have reliable and affordable telephone service in the event of emergencies, such as wildfires, floods, or severe storms.

The CPUC is holding a number of public hearings on this proposal in February and March as well accepting public comment on their website at www.cpuc.ca.gov/proceedings-and-rulemaking/cpuc-public-participation-hearings.

ALTERNATIVES

The Board could choose to not approve the Chair to sign the letter or to make changes to the letter.

PRIOR BOARD ACTION

01/05/2021 Legistar item 21-0038

01/23/2018 Legistar item 18-0077

09/01/2015 Legistar item 15-1020

OTHER DEPARTMENT / AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

Chief Administrative Office

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact associated with this item.

CLERK OF THE BOARD FOLLOW UP ACTIONS

Obtain Chair signature on the letter and return to Alison Winter for distribution.

STRATEGIC PLAN COMPONENT

Safe and Healthy Communities - Strengthen Emergency Response Capabilities and Effectiveness

CONTACT

Alison Winter, Principal Management Analyst