

# California Broadband Council

May 27, 2020  
Meeting Minutes

The California Broadband Council (CBC) met on Wednesday,, May 27, 2020 at 1:35pm via virtual conference (per [California Executive Order N-25-20](#)).

## Agenda Item 1 – Welcome

Council Chair Amy Tong welcomed Council members.

## Roll Call

A quorum was established for the meeting.

Member		Designee	Present	Absent
California Department of Technology Director	Amy Tong		X	
California Public Utilities Commission President	Marybel Batjer	Martha Guzman-Aceves	X	
California Office of Emergency Services Director	Mark Ghilarducci	Patrick Mallon	X	
Superintendent of Public Instruction	Tony Thurmond	Jerry Winkler	X	
Department of General Services Director	Daniel Kim	Brent Jamison	X	
California State Transportation Agency Secretary	David Kim	Lori Pepper	X	
California Emerging Technologies Fund President	Sunne Wright McPeak		X	
California Department of Food and Agriculture	Karen Ross	Arturo Barajas	X	
State Librarian	Greg Lucas	Anne Neville-Bonilla	X	

Governor's Tribal Liaison	Christine Snider		X	
Member of the Senate	Ben Hueso	Sarah Smith	X	
Member of the Assembly	Mike Gipson	Dr. Angelo Williams	X	

**Agenda Item 2 – Council Member Broadband Updates**

Chair Tong noted that since Council members are involved in pandemic response activities, the meeting would focus on updates from members.

[Senator Hueso] Designee Sarah Smith provided broadband legislation updates. The Senate Energy, Utilities, and Communications Committee completed its final policy hearing before the policy deadline for fiscal bills. SB 1058 (Hueso) aims to provide greater access to broadband during emergencies and disasters. SB 1130 (L. Gonzalez) would make modifications to the California Advanced Services Fund by expanding eligibility for the programs in terms of areas considered unserved and by modifying the requirements for infrastructure that would be funded through the program.

[Assembly Member Gipson] Designee Dr. Anthony Williams expressed his appreciation for government relations staff and the Chair on a matter related to a district issue, as well as for the work the California Department of Education has done in terms of connecting school districts in the 64<sup>th</sup> Assembly District and throughout the state, particularly for low income minority districts with limited broadband access. Dr. Williams also noted appreciation of everyone’s work and updates and reports.

Tribal Advisor Christina Snider noted tribal efforts are largely focused on the COVID-19 pandemic and much of what has come up for tribal communities highlights existing gaps and major infrastructure issues that have always been there. She is working to connect the communities to government and private resources to get students and employees access to telework and physical distance. There are critical infrastructure gaps that need hot spots where there is no cell service and providing Chromebooks and laptops isn’t sufficient. They are looking at ways to be more supportive and at larger federal efforts to alleviate issues given what we’re doing as a state. And the population is shifting toward a more mobile population, or at least a work from home population.

[Superintendent of Public Instruction] Designee Jerry Winkler noted the California Department of Education (CDE) has been working on verifying the needs of districts, more than 1500 schools responded to a survey of smaller districts to determine needs and understand some of the things going on. Some teachers are having to connect

with students via mobile phones. Students are also connecting with their teachers via other methods such as Ring. Rural areas have their own specific needs and it's important to respond to those needs and get connectivity to them as quickly as possible. CDE is working with other state and national education organization such as K12 HSN, CENIC, Small School Districts Association, CETF, CATF, CASF, etc. States are providing direction for the federal government for broadband support. CDE is working on getting local assistance to schools and school district mobile connections, a \$5 million dollar grant for assistance with student devices. There are also many grants and many initiatives.

[California Public Utilities Commission] Designee Martha Guzman-Aceves noted that the Commission (CPUC) is looking at its funding programs and trying to see how to best partner with agencies, particularly CDE. CPUC approved \$5,000,000 to work with CDE for prioritizing small, rural, and medium school districts to get them devices including tablets. There is such a great need and this small bit of funding will fund an estimated 20,000 gadgets. The need is far beyond, close to 500,000. CPUC has made changes to, or clarification of, the California Teleconnect Fund, which is funded by phone bills. This direction essentially allowed K – 12 recipients to use additional funds. Thus far the Commission has been able to fund approximately 250,000 hot spots with that money and applications are open until the end of the month. That service will only be available for a few months. The California Advanced Service Infrastructure Funding is looking at its last round of solicitations for more than \$500,000,000 worth of infrastructure projects and there is less than \$3,000,000 in the fund, so the Commission needs to continue to talk to the Legislature and Governor's Office about the continuing need for infrastructure funding. We already have far more demand for the infrastructure funding than actual funding. The Lifeline proceeding is a longstanding program. One of the things the Commission and the Legislature have been looking at is whether the program should be reformed to focus more on the Lifeline service needs of broadband.

[California Office of Emergency Services] Designee Patrick Mallon noted that COVID-19 has complicated deployment of NextGen 911 because of some limitations of access to public safety answering points. It's been delayed about four to six weeks and the Office is doing what it can to make up for that time. The Office has established the Next Generation Demonstration and Test Lab and provided details of the project. Text to 911 is active in 289 of the 438 Public Safety Access Points; 69 are pending within the next couple of days, and 80 that are supposed to be completed by 2021. Goal of location accuracy being completed this summer. The Office is pushing forward with the critical coverage areas of FirstNet. The Office is updating the Public Safety Network. Senate Bill 670 (Chapter 412, Statutes of 2019), requires telecommunications service providers (landline, voice over internet protocol, internet protocol, cellular) to report to Cal OES within 30 minutes if 50% of the service populations in a zip code has an outage so Cal OES can report to the jurisdictions and they can deploy resources based on the fact that at least half of their jurisdiction cannot contact 911. The

regulatory period ended same day as Broadband Council meeting and the statute requires the regulations to be in place by July 1.

[California State Transportation Agency] Designee Lori Pepper noted that their interim broadband coordinator Monica Kress-Wooster has moved on to a permanent position in CalTrans and thanked her for her extraordinary work and leadership. She created an engaged group of executive champions, started an internal action plan to set goals and create strategies to achieve those goals, and will continue to be a source of contact until a replacement is named. She moved the broadband web site to a place on the home page within the working CalTrans page to make it easier to find broadband information and the goal is to update the site to make access more user friendly, pending budget availability, and it will include more information about partnership opportunities. We expect there to be a personnel announcement soon about the broadband coordinator position. The Agency is doing a proof of concept to create mobile hot spots using currently unused transit buses and using ten stack party buses to provide broadband access in digital deserts around Sacramento. The project is built on partnership, primarily with the City of Sacramento, Sac RT, Sacramento Public Libraries, AT&T, Verizon, T-Mobile, Cradlepoint, Aruba, and Sierra. They have also partnered with many community groups, school districts, the California Census, and others to help amplify that the program exists and is there to be used, as well as to determine the best locations. The Agency is also working with many of them to create events for youth. The goal of the proof of concept, which will end on June 30, is to create a playbook of best practices for other state agencies or other entities throughout the state to replicate and scale for their communities.

Chair Tong noted it would be informative to have a presentation on the playbook at the July meeting.

[California Department of Food and Agriculture] Designee Arturo Barajas noted the Department has focused its pandemic response on food supply issues. The Department has done a good job of highlighting the need for broadband in rural areas for growers and ranchers and continues to work on the matter. The Department oversees fairgrounds associated with the state and they were tapped in with COVID-19 response from the get-go. Due to some of the work and data that's been provided about broadband at fairgrounds, it was the first time they were able to report out which fairgrounds were being used and used them as a metric in decision-making. It was a big step in having and using the data. The Department has been working cross agency with many departments on issues that affect California farmers and farm workers.

[Department of General Services] Designee Brent Jamison noted that the Department has been heavily involved in COVID-19 response including the procurement division which has been responsible for coordinating personal protective equipment solicitations and the real estate services group which has been helping establish facilities for field hospitals. The Department recently partnered with the Department of Social Services, in consultation with the Department of Technology, to issue a

management memo, which is basically a directive to state agencies trying to encourage the donation of surplus equipment to foster youth in California colleges and universities. There are more than 20 institutes of higher education interesting in partnering with the state on this initiative and the Department is meeting with numerous foster nonprofits throughout the state to connect the colleges with the organizations to get surplus equipment to foster youth.

[California State Library Designee] Anne Neville-Bonilla noted that there are about 1,100 library branches throughout the state. A recent survey of California public libraries indicated that almost 80% had added virtual programming such as job coaching, story time, adult literacy, K-12 tutoring, and homework help. Some of them are printing personal protective equipment for hospitals and other essential workers in their communities. The State Library has been working with libraries about where and to what extent they are open and accessible to the public even though people can't physically be inside the buildings and with the state WiFi hot spot maps. The Library is using existing funding to make sure libraries have adequate equipment. The Library also provided surplus state equipment to DGS. Libraries opened for curb side pick up but it will be a long time before they will be fully open and they need to find out how to provide access until they can be fully open. Library usage increases in times of need, so the State Library is pursuing grant opportunities to help libraries serve the public, including broadband in their buildings and getting broadband out to their communities.

California Emerging Technology Fund President Sunne Wright McPeak noted that CETF has been working with school districts promoting the interim free and affordable internet service provider offers and have reached more than 3,000,000 eligible households. More than 30,000 people have come to their web site. The Santa Clara County Office of Education promoted the offers in three different languages to provide assistance to sign up. CETF shared with Superintendent Of Public Instruction Thurmond's Task Force that while the internet service providers (ISPs) have stepped up, they need to work more closely with CETF and have more advertising of the free and affordable offers and have state agencies also promote those offers to get as many people signed up as possible.

California Department of Technology Member Amy Tong thanked Department staff and noted that the Department was able to have check ins with internet service providers to get feedback from them and ideas/suggestions on how to best support the state regarding the pandemic for both broadband and closing the digital divide to the areas that need help the most. Ms. Tong thanks the ISPs and technology companies that have provided suggestions and donations to the state to help close the digital divide. The July meeting will be a full meeting, we hope to be able to show an update of the state Geoportal which is being updated to reflect the state WiFi hot spots.

**Public Question for Tribal Liaison:**

Question: Are you working with any federal agencies on the tribal broadband issues?

Ms. Snider's noted that right now the focus is on making sure that Tribal governments are getting the resources they need for the federal stimulus packages to be able to make those decisions for themselves because those are going to be major capital investment projects with no easy solutions. They are trying to make sure Tribal governments are able to make those decisions as they get resources through these stimulus packages. And they are making sure Tribes are equipped to face the current issues. Beyond COVID-19 they will be engaged in more discussions about how to get more of that capital into California given that the issues here are different from anywhere else and that Tribal lands here have a unique situation especially with the number of Tribes in the state. Right now they are working more closely with some of the public health agencies, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and a couple of other agencies to meet in the near term stability goals of Tribal governments and partner as best they can on those as well as work with Congress to help ensure that Tribes are not getting left out of anything that is a priority. The immediate concern is to take care of the health and safety of Tribal communities. In terms of capital investment projects, that may take years to accomplish and completely overhaul infrastructure and it's something that is at the top of mind as they get out of this immediate threat of COVID-19.

Commission Guzman-Aceves noted that the CPUC has a number of limited staff working on such issues and people can contact the Commission for assistance.

### **Agenda Item 3 – Highlights of Additional Broadband Updates and Use Cases**

California Department of Education (CDE) Senior Advisor to the Superintendent of Public Instruction Mary Nicely noted that the Department has been very busy dealing with digital divide issues that arose very quickly and they appreciate the partnership of the other departments. CDE has been identifying the number of hot spots and devices students need. Many students who were connected at school were no longer connected when they got home. The first donation of more than 100,000 hot spots shipped out in the last two weeks, the department is now able to make use of funds that came in, and have been able to ship out more than 21,000 laptops in the last few weeks and are hoping with the CASF funds can get out about another 20,000 and put to use other donated funds. Given the urgent need, the Superintendent pulled together a digital divide task force made up of a number of legislators and he is co-chairing the task force with Senator Leyva. One of the big reasons this was formed was to have a concerted effort to solicit input for funding for more devices and gain expertise on the policy end of what they've been trying to do. They need to get students and their families connected, bring in health care, public safety, banking, EDD, and everyone else that knows who was left out when it came to this digital divide. If kids are connected, families are connected and if families are connected, kids are connected. They are also dealing with infrastructure problems and affordability. They've been fortunate to have the CPUC step in and help schools in desperate need right now of assistance in finding hot spots. They'll be continuing distance learning as they try and

figure out how to reopen. They've had three hearings in just over five weeks with the internet service providers who have been great partners and helping to figure out how to work with them to get people access to low income service. It's not perfect yet and they are giving them liaisons to work with for specific communities that continue to run into barriers to access. They can all work in partnership and that is something that is done in conjunction with the council.

California Department of Aging (CDA) Director Dr. Kim McCoy Wade provided an update on CDA's broadband actions to support older California residents during the pandemic. Dr. Wade noted that it's all about connecting across generations to connect the whole state and highlighted how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected older Californians. People over 65 make up about 20% of those infected and about 80% of COVID deaths. They are at extremely high risk. Older adults are going to be staying at home longer even as people are opening up and going back to work, restaurants, libraries, schools, and places of worship. Older adults have been staying at home the longest since March 15 when the Governor asked that they stay at home. Increasingly older adults live alone for a variety of reasons – never married, divorced, children moved away. Families have changed and being an older adult living alone can make this long period of physical isolation even more socially isolating. The older you are, the higher the percentage of population that does not use the Internet. It could be a skills, broadband, or affordability issue. The same people we are asking to stay at home are the most likely to live alone and least likely to be on the Internet and that's where the Department of Aging has been laser focused over the past few months. Telework gives some real opportunities to think about health care partners but there's so much more than a medical or counseling appointment – it's the connections. It's the video chats/conferencing with grandparents and grandchildren, going to your place of worship, your book club. All those connections are incredibly important as you're physically isolating for months and months. We should not forget the volunteer work and activities and the huge part of our workforce older adults are. The state is asking people to stay at home and they need essential things such as groceries and medications. If we can move even some people to grocery and pharmacy delivery it would be a huge help and then we need to include entertainment education, exercising, making sure there is content that targets older adults of all abilities, races, income, etc. A shout out to the Library who has been a great partner in thinking about e-books and book clubs staying online even as we open up. Just like schools, senior centers had to go digital and residential facilities residents are staying in their rooms and not coming out for activities. There is a reinvention from congregating to not and how do we get them online as quickly as possible. What about senior activities that provide social time, music, exercise? How is that going online? CDA is partnering with organizations in San Diego and San Francisco that specialize in getting older adults online, to do more online, and identifying some webinars which are our new digital divide resource page for older Californians. They are looking to do a leap forward to really align state and local efforts, especially for limited English proficient, rural, and adults living alone and at most risk of isolation. they ask for support in recognizing that older adults with disabilities will be home a lot longer as they manage their risks and

they want to keep that broadband connectivity there and then work on all pieces of the puzzle – first broadband, second the devices, third the skills and training, and then fourth the content as well. In summary, the Department of Aging has:

- Rapidly pivoted services from congregate settings to remote options, both at community/senior centers and in senior living
- Provided trainings to [providers](#) and [families](#) to assist older adults, people with disabilities, and [caregivers](#) to get online and take greater advantage of broadband-enabled tools
- Developed a new state/local program initiative to bridge the digital divide for older adults and people with disabilities, both at home and in senior living - including harder to reach (LEP, live alone, rural, more)

The Department would like to:

- Ensure affordable internet service for all older adults and people with disabilities for an additional 18 months
- Bridge the digital divide for older adults and people with disabilities – particularly in communities with limited English proficiency - by improving broadband access in underserved areas where they live; securing affordable devices to meet their needs; and facilitating their access to digital skills training.

#### **Agenda Item 4 – Public Comment**

Chair Tong opened the meeting for public comments. There were none.

The meeting adjourned at 2:30pm.