

From: CHASE, BRIAN
To: [CA Broadband Council](#)
Cc: SANTANA, SUSAN I
Subject: State Broadband Action Plan
Date: Wednesday, October 21, 2020 8:37:41 AM
Attachments: Letter - CA State Broadband Action Plan.pdf

To the California Broadband Council:

I am writing to share the attached letter from Susan Santana, AT&T Vice President - Legislative Strategy, pertaining to the State Broadband Action Plan.

Best regards,

Brian Chase

Director of Public Affairs

AT&T

A redacted signature block consisting of two solid black horizontal bars. The top bar is shorter than the bottom bar, and they are positioned directly below the AT&T logo.



Susan I. Santana
Vice President
Legislative Strategy



October 20, 2020

Ms. Amy Tong
Director, California Department of Technology
1325 J Street, Suite 1600
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: State Broadband Action Plan

Dear Ms. Tong,

I'm writing this letter as a follow-up to my participation in the California State Broadband Council listening session on October 7th. AT&T is committed to finding solutions to continue narrowing the digital divide and I wanted to share more of our experience and learnings in this effort. The COVID-19 pandemic has only intensified the need for wireless and wireline connectivity, and AT&T is answering the call as our network is handling demand like never before. While we have come a long way in connecting more Californians with access to greater broadband speeds, much remains to be accomplished. We believe that this is a two-part challenge in which the state should: 1) increase broadband adoption rates among the 98% of California households where services are already available; and 2) encourage the deployment of broadband to the 2% of households where services are not yet available.

Over the past five years, AT&T has expanded access to high-speed Internet by investing more than \$135 billion nationwide in our wireless and wireline networks. This totals more in domestic U.S. investment than any other public company. In California specifically, we invested more than \$8.7 billion from 2017-2019 and expanded access to high-speed internet by building more than 2.1 million additional fiber connections across the state. We also continue to enhance mobile broadband connectivity by deploying 5G and 5G+ across California, which is now available in 190 California markets and is unlocking wireless speeds that far exceed some wireline home internet plans.

In addition to this investment, we are also expanding access to mobile broadband in rural communities through the buildout of FirstNet, the nationwide communications platform created for and dedicated to public safety. FirstNet users have access to the entire AT&T LTE mobile broadband network, which already covers over 99% of the U.S. population. To continue to better serve public safety we're actively extending the reach of the FirstNet communications platform by building more than 1,000 new sites, including in rural areas where public safety stakeholders identified a need for the connectivity.



Susan I. Santana
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Although private investment has provided most Californians with the connectivity we enjoy today, private dollars alone won't solve the challenge of completely closing the digital divide. Through our participation in the FCC's Connect America Fund (CAF), we extended high-speed internet service to more than 894,000 homes and businesses in rural parts of 18 states, including more than 113,000 locations in California. CAF Phase II makes high-speed internet available to even more rural customers across the state, as we work to meet our goal of delivering access to approximately 1,117,000 locations by the end of 2020, including more than 141,000 in California.

But despite our significant investment in wireless and wireline broadband networks, there is still much work to do. Based on federal data, we know that in California over 95% of households already have access to broadband speeds at or above 100/10 Mbps and over 98% have access to broadband speeds at or above 25/3 Mbps. Nevertheless, over a third of these households don't yet subscribe to these services, which would provide them with the capability to do all the things they need to do for school, work, and entertainment. This includes the ability to watch streaming high-definition video, participate in high-definition classes and conference calls, and even do so on multiple devices at once.

Therefore, to bridge the real and immediate need for broadband connectivity for distance learning and work opportunities, we believe the state should dedicate resources towards encouraging subscribership of available broadband, while aligning with federal programs encouraging broadband deployment where not currently available. And to not encourage overbuilding areas that lack the aspirational speeds in excess of 100 megabits per second, the state should instead focus on how to reach those few remaining households that lack access to speeds even reaching 25/3 Mbps.

For these reasons, AT&T has supported and would continue to support state policy that aligns with the following principles:

- Increasing broadband adoption among Californians who live where infrastructure already exists, especially those who may not yet be able to afford the service.
- Prioritizing the building of infrastructure to the unserved, hardest-to-reach areas of the state;



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- Supporting a technology-neutral approach that harnesses the broadest possible reach of both wireline and wireless infrastructure;
- Focusing on last-mile infrastructure capable of providing immediate connectivity to California homes and businesses;
- Removing bureaucratic and local government barriers to entry, such as lengthy and cumbersome or duplicative permitting requirements that vary depending on locality.

Given the economic, geographic, and procedural barriers that exist today, I want to thank you for convening this discussion among industry stakeholders. Sharing these and other insights is a crucial step to identify strategies to align state and federal programs, minimize the duplication of efforts, and achieve the greatest possible outcomes for all Californians.

AT&T looks forward to working with Governor Newsom and the California Broadband Council on finding innovative ways to leverage resources and advance private and public partnerships to ensure more Californians have access to affordable Internet, particularly in rural and disadvantaged communities.

Sincerely,

Susan Santana