



Santa Cruz County
Civil Grand Jury

Santa Cruz Grand Jury <grandjury@scgrandjury.org>

Board of Supervisors Responses--2020-2021 Grand Jury Report "Turn On, Tune In, and Drop Out"

Caitlin Smith <Caitlin.Smith@santacruzcounty.us>

Mon, Sep 20, 2021 at 11:52 AM

Good Morning,

Please see attached for the Board of Supervisors responses to the 2020-2021 Grand Jury Report titled "Turn On, Tune In, and Drop Out – Broadband Access in Santa Cruz County.

Best,

Caitlin C. Smith

County Supervisors' Analyst

Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors

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To email all five members of the Board of Supervisors at once,

please use: BoardOfSupervisors@santacruzcounty.us

2 attachments



Grand Jury Report Board Response Cover Letter-Turn On, Tune In....pdf
36K



Board of Supervisors Response Turn On, Tune In, and Drop Out.pdf
260K



County of Santa Cruz

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

701 OCEAN STREET, SUITE 500, SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060-4069
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FOURTH DISTRICT

BRUCE MCPHERSON
FIFTH DISTRICT

September 16, 2021

The Honorable Syda Cogliati
Santa Cruz Courthouse
701 Ocean Street
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

**RE: Response to the 2020-2021 Grand Jury Report "Turn On, Tune In,
and Drop Out – Broadband Access in Santa Cruz County"**

Dear Judge Cogliati:

The purpose of this letter is to formally transmit the response of the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors to the 2020-2021 Grand Jury Report, titled "Turn On, Tune In, and Drop Out – Broadband Access in Santa Cruz County."

Sincerely,

BRUCE MCPHERSON, Chair
Board of Supervisors

BM:ccs
Attachment

CC: Clerk of the Board
Santa Cruz County Grand Jury



**The 2020–2021 Santa Cruz County Civil Grand Jury
Requires the**

Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors

**to Respond to the Findings and Recommendations listed below
which were assigned to them in the Report Titled**

Turn On, Tune In, and Drop Out

Broadband Access in Santa Cruz County

by September 20, 2021

Responses are **required** from elected officials, elected agency or department heads, and elected boards, councils, and committees which are investigated by the Grand Jury. You are required to respond by the California Penal Code [\(PC\) §933\(c\)](#).

Your response will be considered **compliant** under [PC §933.05](#) if it contains an appropriate comment on **all** findings and recommendations **which were assigned to you** in this report.

Please follow the instructions below when preparing your response.

Instructions for Respondents

Your assigned [Findings](#) and [Recommendations](#) are listed on the following pages with check boxes and an expandable space for summaries, timeframes, and explanations. Please follow these instructions, which paraphrase [PC §933.05](#):

1. **For the Findings, mark one of the following responses with an “X” and provide the required additional information:**
 - a. **AGREE with the Finding**, or
 - b. **PARTIALLY DISAGREE with the Finding** – specify the portion of the Finding that is disputed and include an explanation of the reasons why, or
 - c. **DISAGREE with the Finding** – provide an explanation of the reasons why.
2. **For the Recommendations, mark one of the following actions with an “X” and provide the required additional information:**
 - a. **HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED** – provide a summary of the action taken, or
 - b. **HAS NOT YET BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IN THE FUTURE** – provide a timeframe or expected date for completion, or
 - c. **REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS** – provide an explanation, scope, and parameters of an analysis to be completed within six months, or
 - d. **WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED** – provide an explanation of why it is not warranted or not reasonable.
3. **Please confirm the date on which you approved the assigned responses:**

We approved these responses in a regular public meeting as shown
in our minutes dated September 14, 2021.

4. **When your responses are complete, please email your completed Response Packet as a PDF file attachment to both**

The Honorable Judge Syda Cogliati Syda.Cogliati@santacruzcourt.org and
The Santa Cruz County Grand Jury grandjury@scgrandjury.org.

If you have questions about this response form, please contact the Grand Jury by calling 831-454-2099 or by sending an email to grandjury@scgrandjury.org.

Findings

F1. The Broadband Master Plan developed and updated in 2015 is obsolete due to subsequent actions and events.

- AGREE**
- PARTIALLY DISAGREE**
- DISAGREE**

Response explanation (required for a response other than **Agree**):

F2. There has been insufficient official and public advocacy for broadband access. Advocacy cannot succeed without communication about what is being done for constituents and their input into the efforts being performed for them.

- AGREE**
- PARTIALLY DISAGREE**
- DISAGREE**

Response explanation (required for a response other than **Agree**):

There has been significant engagement and interest in development of broadband infrastructure. The County Broadband Master Plan was updated in 2017. In 2017-18, the Office for Economic Development conducted a Broadband Survey and provided results to service providers. In Fall 2018, two community meetings were held in Felton and Aptos inviting local service providers to present and meet directly with interested residents one-on-one at tables after the presentation. Several providers attended including Comcast, AT&T, Spectrum, Ridge, Cruzio, Surfnet among others. The largest barrier is the cost of developing this infrastructure. In April 2021, the Board directed staff to set aside \$500,000 in American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 funds for the purpose of expanding broadband access. In August 2021, the Board authorized the Information Services Department to release a Request for Proposals (RFP) for companies to provide broadband services in unserved/underserved areas of Santa Cruz County.

F3. Starting in 2020, large increases in potential funding and across the board regulatory reform have widened the opportunity for local governments to implement broadband access.

AGREE

PARTIALLY DISAGREE

DISAGREE

Response explanation (required for a response other than **Agree**):

The County has not yet experienced widened opportunities to implement broadband access. New State and federal funding is not available to the County to date, but staff are continuing to monitor and track for new opportunities. For example, in April 2021, the Board directed staff to set aside \$500,000 in American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 funds for the purpose of expanding broadband access. In August 2021, the Board authorized the Information Services Department to release a Request for Proposals (RFP) for companies to provide broadband services in unserved/underserved areas of Santa Cruz County.

F4. An important beneficial outcome of the COVID-19 pandemic has been broadband access and computers for distance learning. Underserved areas, such as the Pajaro Valley where the county's need was the greatest, were significantly improved.

AGREE

PARTIALLY DISAGREE

DISAGREE

Response explanation (required for a response other than **Agree**):

F5. The Board of Supervisors hasn't done enough to take advantage of the growing opportunities to promote broadband access for the county.

AGREE

PARTIALLY DISAGREE

DISAGREE

Response explanation (required for a response other than **Agree**):

The County has been engaged on this issue and continues to monitor and track for new funding opportunities.

F6. The challenges for the establishment of rural broadband networks are significantly different for residential and business use. Coordination and funding is needed from both government and private entities.

AGREE

PARTIALLY DISAGREE

DISAGREE

Response explanation (required for a response other than **Agree**):

Residential and commercial users both rely upon one network.

Recommendations

- R1.** The Board of Supervisors needs to update the 2015 Master Plan within the next six months including, but not limited to:
- 1) the special difficulties and costs posed by rural broadband infrastructure;
 - 2) the challenges and infrastructure achievements in 2020 due to the COVID-19 crisis; and
 - 3) opportunities for new funding sources and due to regulatory changes from the California State and Federal Government and how they are to be coordinated with the efforts to date to provide distance learning and broadband access. (F1, F2, F3, F6)

- HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED** – summarize what has been done
- HAS NOT YET BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IN THE FUTURE** – summarize what will be done and the timeframe
- REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS** – explain the scope and timeframe (not to exceed six months)
- WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED** – explain why

Required response explanation, summary, and timeframe:

The 2015 Master Plan was updated in March of 2017. The update addressed the difficulties and costs of improving rural broadband infrastructure. COVID-19 has not been a significant factor regarding broadband challenges and infrastructure achievements in 2020. The County has not yet experienced widened opportunities to implement broadband access. New State and federal funding is not available to the County to date, but staff are continuing to monitor and track for new opportunities. For example, in April 2021, the Board directed staff to set aside \$500,000 in American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 funds for the purpose of expanding broadband access. In August 2021, the Board authorized the Information Services Department to release a Request for Proposals (RFP) for companies to provide broadband services in unserved/underserved areas of Santa Cruz County.

R2. Within the next six months the Board of Supervisors should identify and apply for all available broadband access funding. (F3, F5)

HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED – summarize what has been done

HAS NOT YET BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IN THE FUTURE – summarize what will be done and the timeframe

REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS – explain the scope and timeframe (not to exceed six months)

WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED – explain why

Required response explanation, summary, and timeframe:

As a point of process, new funding opportunities are brought to the Board for consideration and approval. The County has not yet experienced widened opportunities to access funding to develop broadband infrastructure. New State and federal funding is not available to the County to date, but staff are monitoring and tracking for new opportunities on an ongoing basis.

R3. Within the next six months the Board of Supervisors should establish a program to educate the public concerning the need for expanded broadband access, the importance of obtaining outside funding, and the decisions to be made concerning the role of commercial ISPs. (F2, F3)

HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED – summarize what has been done

HAS NOT YET BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IN THE FUTURE – summarize what will be done and the timeframe

REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS – explain the scope and timeframe (not to exceed six months)

WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED – explain why

Required response explanation, summary, and timeframe:

County residents are educated on the importance of broadband and demand is widespread. There are insufficient resources to implement significant infrastructure enhancements at this time.

R4. Within the next six months the Board of Supervisors should determine whether it is feasible for the county to establish, own, manage, or operate broadband access systems. (F3, F5, F6)

HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED – summarize what has been done

HAS NOT YET BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IN THE FUTURE – summarize what will be done and the timeframe

REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS – explain the scope and timeframe (not to exceed six months)

WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED – explain why

Required response explanation, summary, and timeframe:

The County is not positioned to establish, own, manage, or operate its own broadband access systems due to cost and the rapid speed of technological change. Implementing County-based broadband would be duplicative of private sector efforts to do the same.

R5. Within the next six months the Board of Supervisors should coordinate with the County Office of Education to determine the costs and logistics for continuing internet access in time for the 2022-2023 school year. (F4)

HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED – summarize what has been done

HAS NOT YET BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IN THE FUTURE – summarize what will be done and the timeframe

REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS – explain the scope and timeframe (not to exceed six months)

WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED – explain why

Required response explanation, summary, and timeframe:

Broadband is not a utility. The Board defers to the County Office of Education for its policy and operational decisions.