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Subject:

Public Comment: Item #9A: Countywide Broadband Strategic Plan - Authority Board Meeting - April 16, 2025

Date:

Tuesday, April 15, 2025 5:01:08 PM

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Dear Authority Board Members:

These comments pertain to Item #9A: Countywide Broadband Strategic Plan of your April 16, 2025 meeting. They resemble many of the comments I previously made before and after the March 20, 2025, Technical Coordinating Committee Meeting, which may not have been delivered to committee members or posted in full to the CCTA meeting archive website, bringing into question ALL CCTA's meeting policy and public comment procedures, recent changes specifically to the Planning Committee meeting public comment policies, including "read aloud or summarized, as specified by the Chair," and compliance in full. Please also review my public comments for the April 16, 2026, Authority Board Meeting regarding Advisory Committee Appointments, Regional Coordination, Transparency, Public Engagement, and Electronic Record Maintenance.

These comments must be visible, easily found, and accessible (limiting the number of "clicks" to access) to all interested parties and the public in perpetuity in HTML (link integrity and functionality must be judiciously maintained, kept current, and/or updated, as needed) and PDF format.

As per the normative CCTA non-transparent procedure, the Countywide Broadband Strategic Plan is buried in the attached meeting materials. That said, the Executive Summary is a complete *snow job*. This so-called "*strategic*" plan does not address broadband network service gaps in unserved or underserved communities or attempt to "bridge the digital divide" (see pages 5-8 of 32 at [lata-grantee-manual-062822.pdf](#)). Contra Costa County is generally relatively affluent, and developed areas are **NOT** experiencing gaps in broadband service. At a half million dollars spent, this so-called "*strategic*" document's Comprehensive Vision to "...promote improved internet service..." is neither meaningful nor results-driven. This point is driven home by the statement in CCTA's plan's project purpose section, which blatantly states, "CCTA will explore leveraging existing and planned fiber infrastructure to facilitate broadband expansion." Broadband expansion is not a first priority.

Instead, this is another more pervasive and deliberately hidden effort by CCTA to set up future funding for the City of San Ramon, specifically, the City's Intelligent Transportation System (ITS)

Master Plan ([San-Ramon-ITS-Master-Plan.pdf](#)) and its fiber backbone along Bollinger Canyon Road (BCR), which purposefully intends to **INCREASE SPEEDS AND TRAFFIC FLOW**. Increasing speeds and traffic flow along BCR, where Complete Streets Initiatives and Policies supposedly exist, contradicts the purpose of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's (MTC) Priority Development Area designation and will be incompatible with MTC's Regional Active Transportation Network, which includes segments of BCR. Speeding vehicle traffic *harms the economic development potential of the City of San Ramon's "downtown."* The San Ramon City Council should be encouraging the use of BCR Iron Horse Trail (IHT) Overcrossing by implementing traffic calming measures (specifically not widening and increasing speeds and traffic flow) and providing active transportation infrastructure connections along BCR and in and around its civic facilities, including City Hall, Community Center, Central Park, City Library, Sports Basement (a community bicycling activity provider), and even City Center Bishop Ranch.

CCTA also continues to reinforce the City of San Ramon's lack of a coordinated approach to transportation by its purposeful decision to have two City of San Ramon representatives who are responsible for traffic and transportation issues, not community development or housing, that disproportionately dominated the CCTA's Broadband Advisory Group, who was supposed to provide meaningful guidance to the consultant preparing the Countywide Broadband Strategic Plan. The assignment of two San Ramon members is not a coincidence. Neither is it a coincidence that the CCTA consultant who prepared this so-called "*strategic*" plan is the same one who prepared the City of San Ramon's ITS Master Plan. Project 10.1, identified as the second highest priority project in Table E-3 in the Executive Summary, is situated in relatively recently developed areas within the City of San Ramon, specifically **NOT** a community underserved by broadband service. Of course, the City of San Ramon's needs can't be the highest priority. That would be overly obvious and "*spill the beans*" on the true intent of this so-called "*strategic*" plan.

Internet Service Providers (ISPs) know precisely where they will gain a substantial return on investment in building out their physical networks and gain relatively price-agnostic (due mainly to the limited competition among ISPs within California) long-term paying customers. Given a San Ramon household's average disposable income and as a resident that has coordinated the planning, design, permitting, and construction of both international submarine and terrestrial interstate, intrastate, local/middle-mile, and last-mile broadband networks for all types of network developers and service providers, I can assure you that broadband service is **NOT** lacking within the City of San Ramon, especially given the relative age of development in the areas identified in Table E-3 of the Executive Summary. Except for any adverse terrain issues, which can potentially complicate installation, broadband service is also **FAR** from lacking in Orinda—the location of the highest priority project, Project 2.1, listed in Table E-3 of the Executive Summary. The segment of Camino Pablo in Orinda between Brookwood Road and Miner Road is a collector road, not reaching into properties of significant acreage, which, similar to San Ramon, indicates considerable wealth, specifically **NOT** underserved by any measure. A golf course exists at the intersection of Camino Pablo and Miner Road. Classifying these communities as underserved is "*pure comedy*."

Again, this so-called "*strategic*" plan concerns ITS deployment and installing fiber optic cable to support signal timing coordination and other traffic system needs. It is no mistake that *roads* designate the projects identified in the Executive Summary and that it hides the County's relative affluence, providing relatively few clues as to the communities involved by only labeling the jurisdictions or the "legal" entities. Also, while it may be cost-prohibitive, although certainly **NOT** for San Ramon- or Orinda-based customers, the Executive Summary does not mention the increasing availability of comparable satellite service via Dish or other higher-speed service providers.

All the above points to a more significant core issue: the Executive Summary focuses on reducing CCTA's ITS infrastructure gaps, specifically **NOT** filling broadband service gaps in unserved or

underserved communities. CCTA, through its consultant, is using a needs-based program to pay for additional analysis of the County's ITS infrastructure gaps, as evidenced by heavy reference to the CCTA's Countywide Smart Signals Program. (The maps included in the Executive Summary do not identify their source. Nor does the basemapping include topography or development or development intensity.) The purpose of CCTA's utilizing grant funding from the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) Local Agency Technical Assistance (LATA) Program couldn't be *further* than providing unserved or underserved communities with broadband service and bridging the "digital divide."

If you overlay the maps depicting each CCTA's Countywide Strategic Broadband Plan and Smart Signals Program and the City's ITS Master Plan "on top of one another," which CCTA, of course, has not produced publicly, you will observe the *undeniable overlap and correlation*. How relatively short, limited, or specific purpose-only segments (only valuable for CCTA, where no connections to institutions are noted, only generally referred to - very low-value utility to all other parties other than CCTA) dominate CCTA's documented priorities (This is in part a result of the fact that while ITS infrastructure relies heavily on a fiber-optic cable backbone, although wireless technologies can also be used.), not longer community pairs, or entire communities. (CCTA does display other purpose networks that more logically serve a broader community, precisely Caltrans' needs, to confuse its underlying purpose.) While Caltrans facilities are a beneficial base resource, given their wide disturbed or paved rights-of-way, nothing prevents broadband network developers from finding other routes if they are willing to obtain approvals and permits. Even more to the point, in a recent presentation to the CCTA Technical Coordinating Committee, CCTA staff attempted to assert that the purpose of its broadband plan is to provide unserved or underserved communities with broadband service specifically focused on the areas surrounding Mount Diablo. While it's a no-brainer that wireline broadband service may be lacking in the Mount Diablo vicinity, mainly due to adverse terrain and the resulting installation difficulties, it is highly doubtful that property owners in this specific area and in the City, with their high relative disposable income, are going without broadband service. *To assert such a claim is pure comedy.*

I sincerely hope Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc., who, given my broadband network development knowledge and experience, does not have considerable experience consulting on countywide community-serving broadband network projects, conferred with the CPUC Program staff before this perverse distortion of the plain-meaning requirements detailed in the CPUC award letter of June 30, 2023, signed by Maria I. Ellis ([Contra Costa Transportation Authority LATA award \(1\).pdf](#)) for this highly oversubscribed needs-based funding program. In fact if you review the current maps CPUC relies on for its Federal Funding Account Programs (<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/9fb1e88c59c44178b1768c1f03d77543/page/Page>), in which the LATA Program was the precursor, you will find very few underserved communities in Contra Costa County.

ITS and broadband services to unserved and underserved communities can be jointly developed and co-located. However, that effort requires *enormous* coordination, which is not CCTA's strong suit. Still, the document's Executive Summary claims about this potential connection between these two issues are *laughable*. It is more probable that Contra Costa County's and each separate jurisdiction's community development and housing specialists are more knowledgeable of where broadband service gaps exist if not non-profits like #OaklandUndivided and the Center for Accessible Technology (see [New Training Resources for CPUC Engagement on Broadband – and Beyond - California Forward](#)), precisely not a money-hungry City of San Ramon transportation services division manager and senior traffic engineer.

The so-called Countrywide Broadband Strategic Plan is not one bit "*strategic*." It takes blatant advantage of the substantially oversubscribed CPUC LATA Program, which is needs-based and mainly intended for unserved and underserved populations, anchor institutions, tribal entities, and

agricultural regions. CCTA's use of this CPUC LATA grant funding for selfish parochial interests promulgated in this so-called "*strategic*" plan could intensely sour the CPUC's taste for potentially awarding related program funding to other transportation agencies whose interests, capabilities, experience, existing business model are indeed genuinely focused on bridging the digital divide, not just on signal timing, or limited utility ITS infrastructure.

I fully comprehend CCTA's role in providing transportation infrastructure within the County, but attempting to ensure broadband service to unserved and underserved communities is outside its limited experience. The same is true for providing public transportation service, save for the minimal scope of autonomous shuttle pilots, which contractors, not CCTA staff, operate. Specifically, these are time-limited PILOTS, not yet long-term self-sustaining services. This Executive Summary proves CCTA's glaring lack of experience in complex program or project coordination and persistent heavy reliance on outside consultants in planning, design, environmental review, value engineering, risk assessment, construction, compliance, and operations. CCTA's insufficient knowledge, skills, abilities, experience, and propensity to be *brain-numbingly counterproductive and arrogant is displayed plain as day*. CCTA's approach to using CPUC LATA grant funds to analyze the gaps in its Countywide Smart Signals Program is almost a carbon copy of its modus operandi in supporting and funding contradictory and counterproductive transportation infrastructure within the City of San Ramon (*unproductive habits are difficult to break*).

This Executive Summary is also an extraordinary display of CCTA's lack of transparency, a gross and perverse distortion of the purpose of the CPUC LATA grant, and a misinterpretation of the data that grantees should use to identify broadband service gaps. Instead, the CCTA has used CPUC LATA funding to identify and analyze gaps in its Smart Signals Program and, specifically, to bring more certainty to the City of San Ramon's only remaining significant transportation infrastructure project need based on its current poorly communicated long-term vision to install the fiber backbone to support its signal timing coordination needs along BCR, which will further increase speeds and traffic flow along BCR, again, contradicting the explicit purpose of the BCR Iron Horse Trail (IHT) Overcrossing, ignoring both MTC's Priority Designation Area and inclusion of BCR in the MTC's Regional Active Transportation Network, and potentially providing a yet another (for a total of five recent or future) lost opportunity to take advantage of construction crew mobilizations to install connecting safe and comfortable active transportation infrastructure in and around the BCR IHT Overcrossing and City Hall.

In direct contradiction to Mr. Hoang's remarks made during his presentation of the Item during the March 20, 2025 meeting, the CPUC's LATA is **ALL** about economics, a community's, and more importantly, a family's disposable income which could be spent on broadband service. Please review the other grantee's awarded CPUC LATA grants (see [webposting-with-awarded-021224-\(4\).pdf](#)), recognizing the high speeds, not specific needs, being sought and the fact that CCTA is the **ONLY** transportation authority grant recipient (meaning it must set an example, not lead with arrogant parochial interests). CPUC's project summary of CCTA's project mentions nothing about smart signal timing coordination gaps (yes, based on specific applications, wireless technology CAN be used, but the backbone is critical). The other grantees focus explicitly on analyzing and providing **COMMUNITY** service, not filling ITS infrastructure or single timing gaps. Mr. Hoang, in his presentation, also gave the wrong impression to Authority Board members relative to the purpose of the CPUC's Federal Funding Account and Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program, managed by the National Telecommunication and Information Administration (NTIA). The CPUC's Federal Funding Account and BEAD Program's explicit purpose, if not more focused on actually unserved and underserved communities, is very similar to the CPUC LATA Program, the earlier incarnation of the Federal Funding Account program, specifically not ITS infrastructure or smart signal timing.

CCTA's continued lack of transparency, gross and perverse distortion of program purpose and data,

and persistent kowtowing to the City of San Ramon's incoherent, typically wasteful, contradictory and counterproductive efforts and funding demands only lead to more distrust in government at all levels by Contra Costa County taxpayers, especially at a time when all government funding is uncertain due to concerns of waste, fraud, and abuse.

Given the recent attention the National Telecommunications and Information Administration's Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program has received, imagine the potential field day Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation Chairman Texas Senator Ted Cruz would have making CCTA the Nation's laughing stock on broadband and transportation issues. (Simultaneously drawing his attention to the San Francisco Bay Area's proposed regional tax measure.)

Thank you for considering responsible good governance and real-world perspective.

Sincerely,

Brian Swanson, AICP
San Ramon, California

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On Thu, Apr 10, 2025 at 3:55 PM Contra Costa Transportation Authority <info@ccta.net> wrote:

Contra Costa Transportation Authority
Meeting Update

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2. To comment by video conference, click the "Raise Your Hand" button to request to speak when the Public Comment period is opened on an Agenda item. You will then be unmuted when it is your turn to make your comments for up to 3 minutes. After the allotted time, you will then be re-muted. Instructions for how to "Raise Your Hand" are available at <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/205566129-Raising-your-hand-in-webinars-and-meetings>.

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