

14 September 2018

Comments to California Air Resources Board CARB

Broadband access and adoption is a green strategy that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and shrink the carbon footprint of major infrastructure systems including water, electricity and transportation. This is particularly true for remote and rural communities that lack high population densities.

In addition to efficiency and utility, many benefits of broadband access and adoption are evident in the services provided through community anchor institutions including schools, libraries, health clinics, local non-commercial media, and a wide range of cultural organizations and civic agencies, not least of which are public safety, public works and others involved in disaster response and recovery. (Attached is a one page summary of rural interests in broadband access.)

Resilient connected communities have smaller carbon footprints too!

Access Humboldt supports the Comments filed by the California Emerging Technology Fund and urges the California Air Resources Board to optimize Digital Inclusion in funding from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund.

Access Humboldt is a non-profit, community media & broadband access organization serving the residents and local jurisdictions of Humboldt County on the North Coast of California USA, managing resources that include: cable access TV channels; KZZH FM 96.7 community radio; a wide area broadband network with dedicated optic fiber connections to twenty locations serving local jurisdictions and community anchor institutions; broadband access wireless networks; a Community Media Center with studio and other production equipment and training on the Eureka High School campus; and ongoing operational support for public, educational and governmental access media services.

Our work focuses on getting “least served” and disadvantaged communities connected in meaningful ways with more low-income households engaged online. Thus, we commend and endorse your focus on disadvantaged communities and low-income households.

We also know that collaboration among stakeholders can produce powerful partnerships. We stand ready to assist you in implementing the Third Investment Plan and helping meet the greenhouse gas emission reduction goals for the State of California.

Sincerely,

- signed -

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RURAL COMMUNITIES NEED REAL CONNECTIONS - FAST, OPEN INTERNET

For the public, for education and for local government purposes:

Public Health, Safety and Community Resilience

Diverse geography and long distances give rural communities unique challenges to meet basic needs for social services including health care, police, fire and emergency responders. Where resources are thin there is a special need for community-wide response to recover from natural disasters. Open networks allow people to connect directly with agencies that provide local services, information and products. Closed networks restrict and monetize those connections.

Education and Training - Lifelong Learning

Access to education opportunities is increasingly linked to fast internet access. Open, unrestricted broadband connections empower local experts to share their knowledge across the community and beyond. Local knowledge and unique digital archives of historic and cultural significance can be hosted and shared with robust and open connections. Closed networks allow providers to restrict and further monetize access. Local information resources become less available and more costly to deliver, favoring distant owners and only profitable, funded ideas.

Economic Opportunity- Marketplace of Ideas and Transactions

Rural economies include most of our natural resources and management of those resources increasingly relies upon fast connections to support diverse economic activity and public uses.

Just like big box retail outlets impact locally owned businesses, a closed internet (without Net Neutrality) will bias traffic away from rural services and products, concentrating the market power in corporate centers tied to the network owner. Open Internet supports open markets.

Culture and Arts - Past, Present, Future

Open access, privacy and security are particularly vital for the creative economies of rural and remote communities where innovation and diverse cultures thrive. Many artist inventors are rural. Closed networks monetize scarcity and reduce diversity by creating barriers to enter the marketplace of ideas. Rural areas have less access to all forms of media, not just broadband. Secure and unfiltered access to all information online is vitally important for rural communities.

Civic Engagement - Liberty and Justice

Lacking net neutrality protections, private network providers become the gatekeepers between consumers, businesses, nonprofits and public agencies and the people they serve. Closed networks direct people to advertising or whatever content most benefits the network owner. Open networks support freedom of information and expression, essential human rights.