

South Bay Fiber Network will support regional city facilities through COVID-19 and beyond

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Olivia Valentine, chair, South Bay Cities Council of Governments (SBCCOG) board of directors, and City of Hawthorne councilmember, flips the switch to celebrate the connection of 15 South Bay cities and a number of public agencies to the South Bay Fiber Network (SBFN). Dave Daigle, CEO, American Dark Fiber, stands to her right. The SBCCOG forged a partnership with 15 cities to build a new broadband infrastructure. The SBFN will provide an essential public asset and resource to city governments to manage economic viability during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond by supporting work-from-home governments as cities accelerate a transition to telework.

(Courtesy of South Bay Cities Council of Governments)

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The South Bay Cities Council of Governments hosted a virtual connection celebration Tuesday, Nov. 17, for the completion of its dedicated fiber-optic network. The network, dubbed the South Bay Fiber Network, will provide high-speed, low-cost broadband connectivity to city halls and other local public agencies.

The new broadband infrastructure — made possible through a 15-city municipal partnership — will create opportunities to bridge the “digital divide” in communities underserved with broadband.

The SBCCOG used Los Angeles Metro Measure M subregional transportation improvement funds — typically used for road improvements — to pay the \$6.9 million cost of the network infrastructure, a third less of the price if cities had paid individually.

“Working together as one entity to pay for the capital costs of the infrastructure, the SBCCOG members were able to collectively pay substantially less for world-class, secure, broadband and internet service than individual cities would have paid separately,” Hawthorne City Councilmember Olivia Valentine said.

“By laying this groundwork, cities and the other participating agencies will be able to provide more effective services to their constituents online and reduce trips, saving time and greenhouse gas emissions,” she added.

SBCCOG member city halls — including Carson, El Segundo, Gardena, Hawthorne, Hermosa Beach, Inglewood, Lawndale, Lomita, Manhattan Beach, Palos Verdes Estates, Rancho Palos

Verdes, Redondo Beach, Rolling Hills, Rolling Hills Estates and Torrance — will be connected to the network by the end of the year.

Other local public agencies that will benefit from the SBFN include: Beach Cities Health District, the South Bay Workforce Investment Board, LA Metro Transportation Authority, Los Angeles County Department of Public Works, West Basin Municipal Water District and the Lundquist Institute for Biomedical Innovation, located at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center in Torrance.

American Dark Fiber was awarded the contract to build the network in 2019. Using a middle-mile “fiber ring” design, the network connects to the web at two local data centers. A scalable two-fiber GB network provides bidirectional resiliency and security to those connected to the ring.

“Our goal with the South Bay Fiber Network is to drive digital literacy across the South Bay and to empower those who need it most,” American Dark Fiber CEO Dave Daigle said. “This infrastructure lays the groundwork for better quality of life for residents and businesses in the South Bay for years to come.”

The idea for the SBFN was birthed in 2016 following the departure of South Bay companies like Chemring Energetic Devices, citing a lack of sufficient broadband infrastructure to meet their needs.

The South Bay Workforce Investment Board commissioned a two-year study commissioned with help from Denver-based Magellan Advisors, a consulting firm specializes in helping governments transition into “smart communities.” The firm identified the challenges local governments face by spending “too much for too little IT service,” according to the [100-page study of broadband availability](#).

Additional funding for the study was provided by 2nd District Los Angeles County Supervisor Mark Ridley Thomas’ office.

The network is designed to accommodate future geographic expansion and data growth, eventually providing a platform for the following examples of “smart city” benefits:

- Transition to telework through COVID-19 and beyond,
- “Smart city halls” that can provide virtual municipal services and interactive distance learning to residents, reducing traffic and greenhouse gas emissions,
- Improved traffic management,
- Autonomous vehicle communication,
- Applications for telehealth and telemedicine, including remote diagnostics, video appointments and transmission of large medical files like MRIs.

Gardena’s Rowley Park is one example of how the SBFN will serve to benefit South Bay communities. The city can provide enhanced Wi-Fi service using a 1GB transport circuit from City Hall to support virtual classes and other web-based services.

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