City of Vallejo Secures Over $3.85 Million From CPUC Grant to Expand Broadband Infrastructure in Underserved Areas

In a landmark decision, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) has awarded the City of Vallejo $3,859,088 under the Federal Funding Account (FFA) program to expand broadband infrastructure throughout the community. This initiative aims to improve internet connectivity for underserved areas of the city, a significant move towards closing the digital divide in both residential and commercial zones.

The funding will support four major broadband infrastructure projects designed to address the pressing need for reliable high-speed internet access. These projects include the Mare Island Build, North Sonoma Boulevard expansion, Porter Street to Seaport connectivity, and the Trailer City Park initiative. Together, these efforts are expected to bring transformational changes to Vallejo, enhancing educational access, fostering business growth, and improving residents' overall quality of life.

Collaboration for a Cause

The City of Vallejo's administrative team, Smart Fiber Network, played a pivotal role in securing this substantial grant, collaborating closely with Cal Consulting's Senior Project Manager, Karen Simpson, to prepare and submit a compelling application. The team's forward-thinking approach, combined with Simpson's expertise in grant writing and project development, resulted in a proposal that aligned with state and federal objectives for expanding digital infrastructure in underserved communities.

"Collaboration was key," Simpson noted. "The City of Vallejo understood the critical need to address the gaps in broadband connectivity, and together we created a strategic plan to bring high-speed internet access to areas that have been historically overlooked. This funding will help bridge that gap and ensure a more equitable future for Vallejo's residents."

A Four-Project Plan to Bridge the Digital Divide

Vallejo's grant proposal outlined four distinct projects that will extend broadband networks to underserved areas:

Project 1: Mare Island Build
This project focuses on building the necessary infrastructure to bring high-speed internet to Mare Island, an area with significant historical and economic importance for Vallejo. Once a hub for shipbuilding and manufacturing, Mare Island has recently transformed into a burgeoning area for new business developments, startups, and residential communities. The Mare Island Build will ensure that these developments are supported by cutting-edge digital infrastructure, attracting further investment and innovation.

Project 2: North Sonoma Boulevard
North Sonoma Boulevard is home to a diverse community with many residents and small businesses that currently struggle with inadequate internet connectivity. The expansion of broadband infrastructure in this area will open new doors for economic growth, educational opportunities, and healthcare access, particularly benefiting lower-income households and entrepreneurs who depend on digital services.

Project 3: Porter Street to Seaport Expansion
The Porter Street to Seaport project will enhance internet access in a crucial commercial corridor. Improved broadband infrastructure in this region is expected to boost business operations, especially for companies that rely on fast and reliable internet to remain competitive in today's economy. This project represents a vital investment in Vallejo's economic future, ensuring that local businesses are not left behind as digital technologies continue to evolve.

Project 4: Trailer City Park
The Trailer City Park project will target one of Vallejo's most underserved residential areas. Often overlooked in citywide initiatives, this area has long suffered from limited digital access, leaving its residents disconnected from essential online services, such as telehealth, education, and e-commerce. The broadband expansion in this community is

expected to drastically improve residents' quality of life by providing them with the tools to participate fully in the digital economy.

Addressing a Pressing Need

Vallejo, like many communities across California, faces a digital divide that has only become more evident during the COVID-19 pandemic. As education, work, and healthcare increasingly move online, the need for robust broadband infrastructure has never been more urgent. This grant represents not just a victory for Vallejo but also a critical step toward ensuring that no resident or business is left behind in the digital age.

The CPUC's Federal Funding Account was established to address such disparities by funding broadband infrastructure projects in communities where private investment has been slow to arrive. The program prioritizes areas that have long suffered from poor internet service, ensuring that federal and state resources are used to uplift communities in need.

Naveed Ashraff, City of Vallejo's IT Chief Innovation Officer, praised the collaboration between the city and Cal Consulting, stating, "This funding will allow Vallejo to make significant strides in addressing our broadband needs. Reliable internet is not a luxury; it's a necessity, and this grant will help us provide that to all corners of our city, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to thrive in today's digital world."

Looking Ahead

The four projects funded by the CPUC grant are expected to begin in early 2025, with completion timelines varying depending on the complexity of the infrastructure work. Once completed, these projects will bring Vallejo one step closer to achieving equitable access to high-speed internet for all its residents and businesses.

By focusing on underserved areas, Vallejo's initiative aligns with both state and national goals of expanding digital access to underprivileged communities. The city hopes that this success will serve as a model for other municipalities facing similar challenges, demonstrating the importance of public-private collaboration in bringing essential services to those who need them most.

As the City's Administrative team continues to refine their broadband strategy, Vallejo looks forward to a future where the benefits of the digital economy are within reach for all its citizens.