



Middle-Mile Broadband Initiative

Middle-Mile Advisory Committee Meeting

January 17, 2025

Minutes and Transcript

The Middle-Mile Advisory Committee met on Friday, January 17th at 10:00am PST via virtual conference and in-person.

Agenda Item 1: Welcome

Chief Deputy Director Johnson welcomed everyone to the meeting and expressed the importance of assisting those affected by the current Los Angeles fires.

Chief Deputy Director Johnson welcomed and thanked all MMAC members, designees, presenters and attendees.

A quorum for the meeting was established.

Member		Designee	Present	Absent
California Department of Technology	CIO & Directorate Bailey-Crimmins	Chief Deputy Director Johnson		X
California Public Utilities Commission	President Reynolds		X	
Department of Finance	Chief Deputy Director Perrault		X	
Government Operations Agency	Secretary Tong	Luis Larios		X
Department of Transportation	Director Tavares	Chief Deputy Director Keever		X
State Senate	Senator Gonzalez			X
State Senate	Senator Caballero	Designee was Daniel Banaru		X

State Assembly	Assembly Member Tasha Boerner		X	
State Assembly	Open Seat			
County of Monterey, District 1	Supervisor Alejo	Local Government Representatives		X
County of Del Norte, District 2	Valerie Starkey	Local Government Representatives	X	

Agenda Item 2: Executive Report Out

Mark Monroe shared the executive report out about the ongoing efforts including new or expanded partnerships that continue to strengthen MMBI's initiatives and broaden community impact. Additionally, the FFA grant awardee handoffs are progressing smoothly, ensuring a seamless transition and effective implementation of the awarded grants. Installation progress remains on track, with significant milestones being met as planned. Looking ahead, operational strategies are being refined to optimize efficiency and maintain momentum. Furthermore, the MMBI tribal benefits continue to be a focal point, reinforcing our commitment to supporting and enhancing opportunities for tribal communities.

Agenda Item 3: Project Updates

- **Mark Monroe** provided the California Department of Technology's (CDT's) update: Since the last MMAC meeting, significant progress has been made in expanding partnerships, covering a total of 121 miles. Notably, the Karuk Tribe has contributed 46 miles, strengthening collaboration and infrastructure development within their community. Additionally, the partnership with Gateway Cities has added 75 miles, further enhancing connectivity and regional expansion efforts. These new and expanded partnerships continue to play a vital role in advancing shared goals and increasing the overall impact of our initiatives. CDT Middle Mile and CPCU Last Mile have partnered to streamline the MMBI network FFA grant application process, ensuring efficient coordination and alignment for federally funded broadband projects. Installation for 3,090 miles were started in 2024.
- **Shannon Martin-Guzman** provided an update on Installations Partners and the Government-to-Government engagements:
 - Installation Map
 - installation is progressing with 3,090 miles actively underway, including construction, trenching, and boring. Fiber pulls and testing are also in motion, ensuring the network is built efficiently and meets quality standards
 - Government-to-Government

- Government-to-government partnerships continue to drive joint build efforts, with key collaborations including the Karuk Tribe (46 miles) and Gateway Cities (75 miles). Additionally, joint builds and land leases for hubs are expanding connectivity, benefiting five tribal communities (21 miles, 3 hubs), Ventura County (45 miles), the City of LA Bureau of Street Lighting (13 miles), and the City of Fort Bragg (5.6 miles). These partnerships play a vital role in advancing broadband infrastructure and strengthening community access.
- **Mark Monroe** gave an update on the MMBI operations and timeline:
 - Looking ahead, the Middle Mile Broadband Initiative (MMBI) will be offered through the California Network and Telecommunications (CALNET) program, administered by the California Department of Technology (CDT). This program provides essential telecommunications and network services for state entities, including dedicated internet access, network transport, and dark fiber services. Integrating MMBI into CALNET will enhance connectivity and expand service options for government agencies across California.
- **Matt Rantanen** gave insight on tribal community impact:
 - The expansion of broadband infrastructure is creating significant economic and job opportunities in tribal communities. Construction and maintenance projects are generating local employment, while professional development initiatives are enhancing technical expertise. Additionally, broadband access is opening new revenue opportunities for tribes and enabling telecommuting for jobs and education. Improved connectivity also supports physical and mental health by increasing access to telehealth services and digital resources, contributing to overall community well-being.
- A video was shared: [[click here](#)]
- **Eric Cutright** gave a briefing on the importance of middle-mile for the Karuk Tribe.
- **Monica Hernandez** gave an update on Stakeholder Communications:
 - 2025 Meeting dates: January 31st, May 2nd, August 1st and October 31st
 - The monthly fact sheet was shared, and directions were given on how to access it, along with a QR code.
- **Elias Karam** gave an update on fiber installations, preconstruction, encroachment permits and partnerships:
 - The continued partnership role remains essential in the MMBN fiber and hub installation process, spanning both preconstruction and construction phases. Collaborative efforts ensure efficient deployment of fiber infrastructure and hub installations. Additionally, the RF12 installation partners are actively

working on securing encroachment permits, facilitating smoother implementation and progress of the network expansion

- The preconstruction phase for fiber installations has reached 85% completion, up from 65% in July 2024. This 20% progress reflects steady advancements in design, permitting, and preparation, setting the stage for the construction phase.
 - The map highlights current and planned MMBN hub locations, while the chart shows the preconstruction timeline by CDT Region, with milestones through September 2025 and a running total of completed hubs.
 - Currently Caltrans and the RFI2 partners are still early on in the process towards encroachment permits. It should be noted that some permits have been issued so far. Every builder is at different points in the process for the Caltrans district that they will be working in. Some partners are just in the initial discussion phases.
- **Erik Hunsinger** gave an update on Key Milestones:
 - Key milestones include utilizing D395 as a proof of network architecture, upgrading its huts and electronics to MMBN standards, and targeting transport activation on D395 by December 2025.
 - Electronics Timeline
 - Currently, 60% of the equipment needed for the MMBN is on order from the vendor, with installation activities set to begin in Q1 2025. Optical and IP equipment will be deployed at all 11 sites along the 395 corridor between Barstow and Reno, as well as at two telecom exchange points, Coresite and 11 Great Oaks. GSN, CDT, and Presidio will closely collaborate during this initial deployment phase, supported by the MMBN lab to ensure smooth execution.
 - Proactive coordination with FFA awardees is underway, with planning sessions held with 20 of the 37 awardees. These working sessions focus on key topics such as Dark Fiber vs. Lit Service, interconnection points, network goals, and "Dig Once" strategies to optimize deployment and collaboration.
 - **Maria Ellis** gave an update on the Last Mile Programs.
 - The Last Mile Programs and Investments Overview details several key broadband initiatives, including BEAD, CASF, Loan Loss Reserve, and the Federal Funding Account (FFA).
 - The Federal Funding Account (**FFA**) supports last-mile infrastructure projects. \$1 billion has been awarded for high-quality, reliable last-mile to broader networks. 97 projects have been awarded across 47 counties with more to come.
 - The **Loan Loss Reserve**, which has a \$50 million budget specified by SB 109, aims to support broadband projects by covering loan losses. Approval for final project and bond details are targeted for early 2025.
 - The **BEAD** (Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment) program focuses on Key milestones in 2024 which included the acceptance of the Five-Year Action Plan by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). Approval for Initial Proposal Volume 1 was received on

April 4, 2024, followed by approval for Volume 2 on October 3, 2024. Additionally, the challenge process will be conducted, with results submitted to NTIA for validation.

- Outreach webinars will begin Jan 28th. Register here: <https://www.cpuc.ca.gov/industries-and-topics/internet-and-phone/broadband-implementation-for-california/bead-program/bead-events>

Agenda Item 4: Public Comment

Public comments were made by:

- Patrick Messac, Oakland Undivided
- Paula Treat

Members Final Comments

N/A.

Closing Remarks

Chief Deputy Director Johnson thanked everyone for their attendance and participation. The next meeting will be Friday, April 18th from 10am – 12pm. The meeting adjourned at 11:35am.

Transcript

The Chair: Good morning, everybody. Welcome to the first Middle Mile Advisory Committee meeting of 2025. My name is Jared Johnson. I am the Chief Deputy Director of CDT, and I am here on behalf of Director Bailey Crimmins. I'd like to start off by just acknowledging the devastation caused by the Los Angeles area wildfires. I think we are all affected in some way by what happens, whether it's friends, family, colleagues, there's somebody in your life that is probably affected by those fires. We'd like to thank the first responders and emergency personnel who are working very hard to protect those communities from further devastation. And just know that even though we have regular business to attend to today, our priority turns towards the recovery of that area and making that one of the top priorities for the administration. With that, I'd like to start with some business for the committee this morning. I want to thank our outgoing members, Senate President Pro tem McGuire and Dr. Woods. Both served on the committee for 3 1/2 years and were key voices and fierce advocates for Californians across the state and in their communities in the development of Middle Mile Broadband Initiative. We greatly appreciate their insight, contributions and continued support to the committee and the MMBI. Thank you for your service. While we say goodbye to the outgoing committee members, I also want to take the opportunity to welcome our newest member, Senator Caballero, who is represented today by Mr. Banaru. Senator Caballero represents the 14th District and has served as

Mayor of Salinas and Assembly Member for the 28th District. Senator Caballero has been a great supporter of the MMBI, and we are thrilled to have her join us to continue this good work. We'll now get started with Roll Call, hear brief comments from members, then hear project updates and public comment. Ms. Alvarado, will you please call roll and review the meeting housekeeping items.

Alicia Alvarado: Thank you. Housekeeping rules Statement. Attendees, please note there is time allocated at the end of the meeting for public comment. Presenters, please queue Sam to advance your slides. Committee members, please use the Raise Your Hand feature on Zoom to queue The Chair to call on you to speak. Now, committee member roll call. Chief Deputy Director Johnson.

Chief Deputy Director Johnson: Present

Alicia Alvarado: President Reynolds.

President Reynolds: Here.

Alicia Alvarado: Chief Deputy Director Perrault.

Chief Deputy Director Perrault: Here.

Alicia Alvarado: Director Tavares.

Mike Kever: Mike Kever for Director Tavares, who's responding to the LA fires.

Alicia Alvarado: Secretary Tong.

Luis Larios: Luis Larios on behalf of Secretary Tong, who's responding to LA fires.

Alicia Alvarado: Senator Gonzalez, Senator Caballero, Assembly Member Boerner, Supervisor Alejo, Supervisor Starkey.

Supervisor Starkey: I am here.

Alicia Alvarado: Back to you, Chief Deputy Director Johnson.

The Chair: Thank you. Before we begin, are there any committee members who would like to provide brief comments before we move to the project updates? Ms. Reynolds.

President Reynolds: Yeah, thank you. I just wanted to make a brief comment to mark a milestone in the work that we're doing on Broadband for All. We've allocated over a billion dollars in the federal funding last mile grant program. So reach that billion dollar mark in terms of awards, we've awarded grants to 52 counties and counting. We still have more to come and these grants will help to serve unserved residents and businesses throughout California, focusing on disadvantaged communities and done in close coordination with the Middle Mile and the CDT. So I wanted to recognize that I think it's, you know, important to celebrate these milestones. And I know that this is a lot of work reflected in reaching this point. So thank you for giving me the opportunity to highlight that.

The Chair: Thank you. I'm not seeing any other hands or comments online so we will begin with the executive report out from Mark Monroe.

Mark Monroe: Good morning, Mark Monroe, Deputy Director for the Middle Mile of Broadband Initiative. I want to welcome our new and returning MMAC members to the first quarterly MMAC meeting of 2025. I appreciate the opportunity to provide another update on this important project this morning. This morning, we have another full agenda. We can jump to the next slide here. Most will remember the important partnerships that we have developed for this project. And this week excuse me, we've signed a few additional governments to government partnerships. CPUC and CDT have also formalized a handoff process for FFA grant recipients that will be providing an update on that. We'll also provide an update on the broader MMBI installation efforts and a look towards efforts to operationalize the network. We will also provide some more details on how the MMBI partnerships will benefit tribal communities and Caltrans, GSN and the CPUC will be providing updates on their important components in their roles in the project. CDT continues to be on track to light up parts of the network by early 2026 and to complete the network by the end of 2026. And that ends my executive report out.

The Chair: Thank you. Mr. Monroe. Do any committee members have questions about Mr. Monroe's update? OK. I'm not hearing any questions or seeing any online. So we're going to move to our second agenda item, an update from the California Department of Technology. The five presenters will be Mr. Mark Monroe, Mr. Martin Guzman, Mr. Rantanen of the Southern California Tribal Chairman's Association, Mr.

Cutright, CIO for the Karuk Tribe, and Ms. Monica Hernandez. We will break between each presenter to give the members an opportunity to ask questions, Mr. Monroe.

Mark Monroe: All right. Yeah, here we go. So most will be tracking that CDT anticipates partnerships to account for more than 7300 miles of the MMBI network. This includes the two latest government to government joint build partnership signed this week. One is with the Karuk Tribe for two segments of Humboldt County totaling 46 miles, one along State Route 101 and one along State Route 96 and the other is with the Gateway Cities Council of Governments. This 75 mile joint build project is going to provide middle mile infrastructure as part of a broader FFA grant funded project reaching historically unserved and underserved communities in LA County. I'll move to the next slide. We had touched on this briefly at the October MMAC, but as we all know providing connectivity requires both the middle mile and last mile. And so the FFA grants that are noted by President Reynolds are really a key component of that. CDT has worked closely with CPUC as FFA grant awards are being made to ensure that MMBI reaches the FFA grant locations that plan to use MMBI. Well, FFA grant applicants have been working with CPUC directly up until the award of the FFA grant. It's really important that CDT work directly with the awardee to make sure that the last mile project is developed in a way that will facilitate the easiest connection to the MMBI network for the grant recipients. So since last October, CPUC and CDT have formalized and implemented a process for both entities to meet with each FFA grant recipient and generate and generate the necessary information and conversations about how best to connect to the MMBI network now that the project is moving forward. We jump to the next slide real briefly here. Here you can see a snapshot of where the project stood as the end of December. Well, a few years ago, most of the construction was originally anticipated to start in 2025. By the end of 2024, we were able to start construction at more than 3000 miles of the network. And this early work is expected to help CDT bring some segments online as I mentioned earlier, as early as early 2026, well ahead of the December 2026 deadline. And that ends this section of my MMBI update for CDT.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Monroe. Do any committee members have any questions or comments? I'm not hearing any. So we will move on next update from Mr. Martin-Guzman.

Shannon Martin-Guzman: Thank you, Mark and Deputy Director Johnson. Lots of exciting movement within the program with the new partnerships connecting with last mile providers to accommodate desired access points and continuing to kick off construction across the state. Next slide please. Representing in yellow on the map, here are over 60 unique routes in many areas of the state totaling over 3000 miles that are in various stages of construction. These miles represent all Middle Mile Broadband initiative delivery methods including lease, joint build, job order contracts which are administered by Caltrans in a procured span along US Route 395. If you happen to

drive some of these routes, you may have noticed construction crews in action installing fiber optic assets into the ground via trenching or boring underground. Typically, the large orange reels, a conduit may be a sign that it is a Middle Mile project. Depending on the installation stage, construction crews may be digging the trench, placing conduit, pulling conduit through boards or blowing fiber through installed conduits. While you may have experienced light traffic delays, it will be well worth the wait for the unserved and underserved communities where the network is operating. Next slide please. This slide represents the installation progress some of our RFI Squared partners have made since the last Middle Mile Advisory Committee meeting in October of last year. Along with the increase of the total RFI Squared partnership miles due to the addition of hub entries, engineering refinements and new partnerships. As shown in the table, our partners have started installation on an additional 1200 miles in various areas of the state where permits have been attained, bringing our total to a little under 3000 miles currently in the installation stage. These additional miles are attributed to the CVIN, Lumen, Digital 395, American Dark Fiber and Arcadian Infracom partnerships. Next slide, please. This next slide highlights the government to government partnerships that have recently resulted in executed contracts or are nearing execution of a formal agreement throughout the state. As Mark highlighted earlier, we are excited to announce the newest partners to the program and recently executed a contract with the Gateway Cities Council of Government totally 75 miles and also the Karuk Tribe totaling 46 miles with both partners being FFA recipients. However, we are not finished as we are in active negotiations with five tribal communities for joint build projects that would total 21 miles or placement of hubs that will house our electronics required to operate the network. In addition, the program is nearing execution of formal agreements with Ventura County, City of LA, Bureau of Street Lighting and the City of Fort Bragg and that would total over 63 miles of conduit, fiber, and vault installation once the agreements are signed. That concludes the RFI Squared partner updates. I would like to open it up to any members for questions.

Director Perrault: Just a quick question, how many miles do we have that are ready to connect? It was hard to tell on that map.

Shannon Martin-Guzman: No miles are ready to connect at this point.

Director Perrault: How far are we?

Shannon Martin-Guzman: As Mark had mentioned earlier, we are anticipating early 2026. One key component and allowing miles that are ready to connect will be the installation of our hubs. Yeah. And those are planned to start for deployment in late Q1 and early Q2 of this year.

Director Perrault: And I'm sure you've said this before, I just, I couldn't remember. And then I don't know if this is the appropriate time to ask this question or if it's later in the presentation. But the fact that you mentioned that we're in some continued contract negotiations or partnerships down in the LA region, are we having an impact on installation due to fires or are we having to change any of our processes in that space?

Shannon Martin-Guzman: Yeah, there were some areas where we have active construction taking place that are near the fires. But they have not been directly impacted.

Director Perrault: OK, great. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you. Mr. Martin-Guzman, Mr. Monroe, will we go to you?

Mark Monroe: Yes, please.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mark Monroe: All right. If we can jump to the next slide with the timeline. There we go. So yeah, what we have here is, is a new visual we've put together. It shows our development effort along the top with installation of hubs and electronics beginning this year, in addition to the continued fiber construction, which again we anticipate completing on schedule by the end of 2026. But in the below section, you can see our current marketing efforts as we reach out to FFA grant awardees as well as other potential customers. We can also see an early effort that we are working on with GSN to identify customers prior to the operations TPA coming on board. And as most will be tracking, we are currently in that procurement process for the operator which we hope to complete later this year, which will be key for being able to start providing operation. I want to jump to the next slide real quick here. We also wanted to briefly remind the committee members and the public that CDT currently operates the CALNET program whereby telecommunications companies make services available to the state through CDT and state entities can then access these contracts through CDT's CALNET program. When MMBI network operations begin, it will also be offered as a service on CALNET, providing dedicated Internet access, network transport, as well as dark fiber services. The network will help meet the state's broadband needs and the state will help support the network. And that ends my project update.

The Chair: Thank you, do any members have questions or comments. Supervisor Starkey.

Alicia Alvarado: Supervisor Starkey, you may unmute.

Supervisor Starkey: Am I good?

The Chair: Yes, we hear you OK.

Supervisor Starkey: My, question is are we putting on target dates for the RFI squared to begin construction to ensure that they have enough time to complete just construction by the end of 2026? Are we kind of front loading that a little bit to make sure that the agencies that we're contracting with have a hard date where they have to begin their construction?

Shannon Martin-Guzman: Yes, that is correct. We work very closely with all of our joint build partners to ensure that we have a very defined exact construction schedules that allow them to complete construction by the defined deadlines by December 2026. Absolutely.

Supervisor Starkey: Ok. Because that's one thing that I would like to maybe this year we're still kind of early in, but by the beginning of 2026, I would really like to make sure that those agencies, those joint build partners have a timeline for us to be able to review to make sure that the construction can be completed by the end of 2026. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you. No further comments or questions we move along. Next, we have a guest speaker, Mr. Matt Rantanen with the Southern California Tribal Chairman's Association.

Matt Rantanen: Thank you, Deputy Director and thank you for having me today. I just wanted to, and I've been in and out of these rooms for the last 24 years with Southern California Tribal Chairman's Association, but I am here today with Cenics Middle Mile Broadband initiative, Golden State Net as the tribal liaison and I've been working with the efforts in MMBI for the last two plus years. I am very excited to announce that the middle mile broadband initiative has created a lot of opportunities within tribal communities regarding, you know, construction and maintenance jobs with the fiber build that's coming through opportunities to build last mile to their community members. There are technical assistance grants for the state that are supportive of, you know, the needs and the planning of the operations that need to take place to

be able to manage their own communications. There are partnerships with telecom companies, several of them in the room. You know, there's professional development as well as environmental cultural resource protection. MMBI and the Middle Mile Broadband Network itself enable tribes to take on and manage their own communications and their own opportunities on a regular basis. And it's very exciting to report that we have 5 tribes that are building over 100 miles of this network with the state of California, as well as 3 tribes hosting network infrastructure huts or hubs, as we call them, to support the network itself. And tribes are very eager to get access to this because it opens up the door of possibilities that they currently are cut off from a lot of reservations similar to an island without communications. And this really opens economic development and community development when that happens. So there are 15 tribes that are directly on the route that have engaged CDT and have accepted the tribal policy and are working with us in their lands. And there are 8 more tribes in conversation about accepting that tribal policy and stepping into the ownership of this network, as well as a host of tribes have applied for and received FFA application funding, Tribal Broadband Connectivity program funding out of NTIA as well as rural utility services through USDA and such. And they're intending to use the Middle mile broadband network as their backhaul and their support. So it's very, very influential and supportive of the tribal communities state of California. And then, in closing, we have another guest speaker after me, which is going to be very interesting. But in closing, I just want to say that I think the first time I said it was at a Cenic conference, which is our parent organization, "The minds we need may not be on the Internet yet and they may very well be located on these reservations that are getting an opportunity through the Middle Mile." So thank you.

The Chair: Thank you. Mr. Rantanen, do any members have questions or comments? I am not seeing. President Reynolds, please.

President Reynolds: Thank you. I just wanted to thank you for being here and presenting. This is great information. It sounds like that the work is going well and there's lots of coordination and thought put into planning and then implementation. So I wanted to express my appreciation and really great to hear from you directly.

Matt Rantanen: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you. Not seeing any other members with questions or comments so we are going to move along. Next, we have a short video to share that highlights the California Department of Technology's trip to Happy Camp where we met with the Kuruk Tribes leadership.

MMAC Video: For thousands of years along the Klamath River, the Kuruk Tribe have

lived sustaining culture, ceremony and community. Today, they're forging a new path to ensure future generations remain connected to each other and to the world. The Karuk Tribe is partnering with the California Department of Technology on the Middle Mile Broadband Initiative, a program building over 8000 miles of Open Access network to close the digital divide. Broadband is so vital, so important to these communities, the economic development, the healthcare needs, the education needs. This joint build project will span dozens of miles, linking remote stretches of Northern California. It's a crucial backbone that will enable service providers to extend high speed Internet to the Karuk, Hoopa Valley and Yurok Tribes, as well as other rural areas. So I have 10 children and I have young ones. I have older ones that are in their late 20s, overcame. Nobody had Internet to teach our children. They were passing out these little routers to people or hotspots or whatever. People need to have a connection to outside, to their family, to shop. You know, those are just little things, but those are the really important things when you don't have a car, and you can't go anywhere. Before I became chairman of the Karuk Tribe, I was a teacher and an educator and I always told the students to pursue your education, to follow your dreams, and the Internet offers you the opportunity to still pursue your education. And that really opens the door for our students to do both. That's what kids are growing up in now is it's an adaptive culture that has to learn how to balance both sides of their world, the modern side with Internet and education. How do we balance that with our cultural teachings and our ceremonies? Now this has been their home for 10,000 years, and as one elder told me, they want to live here, another 10,000. There's fear when it comes to progress because as tribal people that we've learned through past experience that change can be a really bad thing. My goal and my dream would be to see that people that live here could work from home in this beautiful area that they live in and not be forced to make life decisions that take them out or that make them suffer. Reaching all 58 counties, the Middle Mile Broadband Network will transform how Californians live, learn, work and connect for generations to come.

The Chair: Thank you. So next, I have the pleasure of introducing Mr. Eric Cutright, the CIO of the Karuk Tribe, to give his comments on our partnership. Thank you for joining us, Mr. Cutright.

Eric Cutright: Greetings, everyone. Thank you for inviting me. I'm excited about the partnership between the Middle Mile Broadband Network and the Karuk Tribe. The Karuk Tribe has been working to improve broadband for over a decade now in the Karuk Ancestral Territory, especially in Humboldt County. Karuk lands and tribal lands in general are plagued with difficulties related to communications. We still have communities that have no cell service. We have communities that don't even have power. And working towards these partnerships is really going to be a life changer for many of the people that live in the Karuk Ancestral territory and in the neighboring communities that we're working to serve. I just want to briefly highlight some of the benefits that this is going to have for our populations. In the video, I mentioned healthcare and education, but another one that often gets overlooked is public

safety. In fact, broadband can literally save lives. You know, if you have first responders, whether that's EMTs or firefighters out there, if they can't communicate back or if the residents that need to report a problem can't dial 911 because communications are out. I mean, it could literally save lives to have these networks up because we've had instances where people have passed away, unfortunately, because they couldn't contact, you know, emergency services. Another area that is often overlooked is isolationism. Without broadband, especially without cell service, many of our tribal youth feel isolated and alone. And there have been epidemics of suicides, and we're really hoping to put that behind us as we get these tribal lands connected. You know, other benefits include things like workforce development, reducing travel expenses, you know, improved government communications and recreation. I mean, broadband is generally considered fun by most to use it. And so we're really excited to be in this partnership and to work with CDT to build these middle mile fibers. The Karuk Tribe has been working on our own broadband projects, which will partner well with the CDT. And we're ready to begin construction probably in April of this year on those 45 miles that are in the partnership. Does anyone have any questions?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Cutright. We appreciate you joining us today and we look forward to continuing our partnership. I will ask one more time if any members have questions or comments from Mr. Cutright, Chief Deputy Kever.

Michael Kever: Yeah, thank you. And I think it's a general question, but as I understand the presentation, it's with regard to the Middle Mile network. The question has to do with is there more information on the plans, maybe it's implied on the connectivity to the travel communities with the last mile.

Mark Monroe: Yes, that's absolutely right. And so as we noted that we have to have those last mile partnerships, the partnership with the Karuk tribe, I think one of the things they'd noted is that they had received, I'm going to say a federal NTIA grant and you get a sum of money, you have to go build that out. The partnership with us is really with the CDT with the MMBI in sharing those construction costs has helped to make that much more feasible. And so, when we look at a lot of the partnerships that MMBI is doing or joint builds and such, those are important from the standpoint that we're sharing these construction costs and it reduces our costs, but also reduces our partners costs for putting in their last mile infrastructure.

The Chair: Mr. Cutright, is there anything you'd like to add to that?

Eric Cutright: Yes. For the partnership area, the 45 miles of Middle mile fiber, the Karuk Tribe is building, the Karuk Tribe intends to be the last mile provider for all the homes along those sections. The Karuk Tribe already operates an ISP in the community of

Orleans, and that's the community that's going to be improved by our FFA grant. But for at least this small section, the Karuk Tribe is taking responsibility for both the middle mile and the last mile.

The Chair: Thank you. And President Reynolds has a comment.

President Reynolds: Yeah, thanks. And first, let me thank Mr. Cutright for speaking to us directly. It really means a lot to hear from you, and I appreciate your appearance before the committee. And then I just wanted to reiterate the partnership that the CPUC has with the Karuk Tribe in terms of developing the last mile, doing planning and we've also facilitated funding. And so there is a lot of work going on with the last mile projects in that area. And so just want to thank everyone for the work and I know my staff really appreciates the engagement.

The Chair: Thank you. I think that is it for comments and questions, so we'll move on to our next update. Ms. Monica Hernandez will provide an MMBI stakeholder engagement update.

Monica Hernandez: Thank you, Mr. Johnson. Before I begin my formal presentation, I do have a souvenir from our visit to the Karuk Tribe. We spent one day at the People's Center Museum. Sorry, I wanted to make sure I got that right. And we received a tea, a leaf that is used very commonly with the Karuk tribe. It's very similar to what most of us would know as a Bay leaf, or if you're a Latino person, you might know it as Laurel. It's used for teas; it's used for burning and homes as incense. It has a lot of medicinal and healing power. So I want to share that with all of you really quickly. And we have plenty for our colleagues and staff and large amount of guests today in the audience so happy to spread that. It was a really incredible visit for those of us who got to go there and spend time with the council, spend time at the museum and really here again, you saw in the video, but the firsthand stories of how important these investments for tribal communities are. And we appreciate again the partnership with the PUC as well up there. It's really transformational. So may I have the slide deck up please as well, since it's the start of the new year and we do have some new members for the Middle Mile Advisory Committee, I want to give a very brief background on what underpins our stakeholder engagement strategy. When I first started, many of my colleagues noted that we had significant public comment at the Middle Mile Advisory Committee, and that was pretty much the main entry point for folks. And as you know, under Bagley Keene, folks on the dais are not allowed to comment back. So we had stakeholders who were coming to these meetings asking questions and frankly feeling very frustrated. And so we wanted to create a venue where folks could engage and actually have conversations with us, ask questions, and we could also ensure that stakeholders had the accurate information. Sometimes things are misinterpreted, or they're not put online right away. So we started a quarterly cadence of stakeholder engagement meetings primarily targeted at advocacy groups, folks who were not in

government, and really people who were interested. This was not a place necessarily for our joint build partners to come and meet with us, but really folks who didn't have a place. The agendas for these meetings closely mirror what happens here at the MMAC. They just slightly follow again on that quarterly cadence. We want to provide the latest information, construction builds, partnerships and in these meetings, we actually heard a lot to help us increase our transparency. Thank you for putting that next slide up. Agendas really again opening up a lens and creating a two way venue for conversation, but not intended to reduce anybody coming and speaking directly with you and making comment at the Middle Mile advisory committees. So if I could have the next slide please. This slide actually shows one of the ways that feedback was implemented that we heard. So if you look at the green arrow on the screen, you can scan the QR code, it will take you to that page. We have a monthly fact sheet that has little spotlight stories of what might be a recent milestone, updates on pre planning and installation. It's really meant to be an at a glance document. If I could have the next slide, please. If you look in the top right corner, we have an update date. So we do update this monthly, the 4th Monday of the month that coincides with all of our online updates. So one of the things we heard last year or the year before is folks who didn't know how frequently our map and information was getting updated. So how something was moving from pre planning to installation. So we now have this regular pattern of updates. Let's see here. Excuse me as I catch up to my own notes. Moving forward, I do want to share, and we had intended to hear as well. We will be sharing groundbreaking event updates. Obviously, we will invite the Middle Mile Advisory Committee to attend these events. Most recently, we were in communications with the LA Bureau of St. Lighting. That's actually a public partnership. Our groundbreaking with them is postponed indefinitely. As you know, we all can agree there emergency response activities that are a priority, and it would not be appropriate to have a celebratory event. We are planning other groundbreakings in the spring, but given the massive devastation of LA, we are taking those in stride and consideration. And as they become closer, we'll still reconsider because even if it's not in the LA area, it still might not be appropriate to have such a celebratory event. But as you heard from Shannon, thankfully at present, there's no known delays or impacts to planning installation of the Middle Mile. So with that, I'm going to pause. I'm happy to answer questions. I can go a little bit deeper into how the meetings evolved over the last calendar year from the types of questions we're getting, the kinds of feedback we're getting, if that is of interest. So I'll pause right there.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Hernandez. Do any members have any questions? President Reynolds.

President Reynolds: First, I'll recognize that what you're taking on is challenging. We live in a state of 40 million people, and we really do want to engage, but it's difficult given the size of our state in the diversity and the undertaking process to really hear from the public and be able to engage with them, not just listen, but also respond and have a more of a dialogue. I think it's really important part of this process. And so I appreciate

you've taken on this difficult path and the endeavor is really difficult and I appreciate that you're doing it. I would like to hear a little bit about some of the things you're hearing. I don't want to take us off track, but just maybe brief description which I heard you offer. So I just wanted to say, Mr. Chair, I'm interested in hearing a little bit more, if that's OK with you.

The Chair: Yes, please Miss Hernandez.

Monica Hernandez: I think it's very fair to say that the first critique which I would also say was a valid critique is that we did not have timely information available online that was understandable. That was also germane to what the stakeholders were looking for and those types of things were who are the joint build partners and where we are on the entire network in terms of pre planning and installation where areas are moving faster or slower. So one of the things we made a number of modifications last year based on stakeholder feedback to the online map. So we now have many more layers where stakeholders can toggle on and off their area of interest if they want to look at joint build, if they want to look at our Caltrans builds, if they want to zoom into a specific county or area. So I think that was one of the biggest critiques. And we again, we have our fact sheet as well in response to that. Let me reflect back on some of our feedback specifically to the format of our meetings. Very interesting we've heard as we have adapted those as well. Previously we were holding the meeting and then doing mostly following up with our presentation, following up with any questions that needed to be answered that weren't fully answered, following up and scheduling meetings. Probably halfway through last year, we changed that so as folks register, they can submit their questions ahead of time. And I think we've probably had at least three meetings that were like, oh well, let's meet with this person rather than making them wait because it's not really a general question, it's specific to an area or to a project. So we've also then developed direct relationships with stakeholders in that way. After each of the presentations, we invite a Q&A, we open up the floor for questions. We also encourage live questions. And so oftentimes they'll be a presentation happening in the meeting and we're actively answering questions during those presentations. We've also got feedback that the meetings are too long and not long enough. So often when you work in public affairs and engagement, that's kind of the place you want to be. It's like, OK, how do we still satisfy both sides? And listening to both and trying to solve for both is a challenge. So we stay on the line with our staff and to the extent possible, we do the follow up or meetings ahead of time where it's not typical where somebody asks one question and it's just a simple yes or no. It's a dialogue and it's a conversation. So we want to have that in those venues. But sending again the questions in advance I think has really helped improve our transparency and communication. It's typical when you're doing this type of work that if one person has a question, it's likely a lot more have the same question. So we want to do that as to elevate those issues, concerns, and comments to a broader audience when possible. Our attendance numbers from early 2024 have gone down, they've changed. And our feedback, we do an evaluation after each session again so we

can adapt and ask for specific feedback. If somebody's like I didn't hear this or I want to hear more, we can again follow up directly as needed and then fold those comments into two meetings moving forward and we plan to do that again. I will say that the response to our evaluations have gone down significantly where I think our first meeting probably, we had 95% of the attendees complete the evaluation. At our last meeting of 2024, I think we only had four people complete that. To me, that indicates either they don't feel they need to give evaluations, but they're still coming to our meetings. And for me, the attendance is more important than the feedback because I think if somebody is frustrated or has something, they now have contacts as well. They have individuals at the Department of Technology that they can connect to ask.

President Reynolds: Thank you.

Monica Hernandez: You're welcome. Thank you.

The Chair: OK. Any other comments or questions? Assembly Member Boerner.

Assembly Member Boerner: Thank you so much and I really appreciate the presentation this morning. Sorry I was a little late. We had session. I did want to Oh, do you want to move that because it's annoying me. I wanted to ask you when I looked at your maps in the orange segments that you're communicating to people and maybe there's a better question for Caltrans. What are the differences that we call preconstruction and permitting because they gives the impression that all those things are on track. But we know all the pre-construction work was supposed to have been done by December 2024. So I don't know if you can comment on that, somebody comment on that or maybe I'll leave it for the Caltrans presentation.

Elias Karam: Oh, so that will be part of the update of the Caltrans portion, which I believe is next.

The Chair: Thank you, Member Boerner, we'll proceed. And first, I would like to give a thank you to Mr. Jeff Wiley. He has retired and we would just like to say thank you to him for his contributions to the MMBI project over the past year. We wish him well on his retirement. With that, we're going to move on to our Caltrans update. And I would like to now introduce and welcome Caltrans' new Assistant Deputy Director, Elias Karam, who will be giving Caltrans update today.

Elias Karam: Thank you. Good morning, Chief Deputy Director Jared Johnson, committee members and others from the public. My name is Elias Karam, the new

Assistant Deputy Director for the Middle Mile Broadband Initiative MMBI Caltrans. I'm pleased to provide you with an update on Caltrans' critical contributions to this transformative initiative. Next slide please. Today I will share our recent progress, highlight ongoing efforts and outline the path forward as we work to deliver this groundbreaking project. The picture on the right shows equipment that is used for trenching in pavement areas on active construction projects throughout California. There are three main components to Caltrans role in delivering the Middle Mile broadband network. Plan and construct 779 miles of infrastructure on state highway right away. Design and install 108 signal boosting network hubs and provide oversight and issue permits for CDT partners to construct in Caltrans right away. Next slide please. Caltrans has made significant progress in the design and environmental phase of the Caltrans building. As of this month, Caltrans is 94% complete with the tasks associated with the design and environmental phase and we expect to begin construction on more miles soon. Next slide, please. This chart reflects that some miles that were anticipated to have the design and environmental work complete at the end of 2024 will now be completed this quarter. While the design is complete for all segments, additional coordination has been needed with our external partners for approvals and permits. We are on track for meeting the December 2026 construction deadline for completion of the Caltrans build miles. Next slide please. Following the design and environmental phase is the construction phase. This slide features the miles of infrastructure within the Caltrans build that have already transitioned into the construction phase. Currently, 91 miles are actively under construction, and we anticipate that all Caltrans build miles will be ready for construction by March 31st of 2025. Next slide, please. This project in Tahoe with its complex geography and location in an environmentally sensitive area epitomizes the challenges faced in constructing the Caltrans built. Next slide please. Caltrans is designing a portion of the network hubs that are critical to the middle mile broadband network. This slide highlights the overall progress on the hubs. Currently the hubs are in the design and environmental phase with approximately 75% of the project task complete. This reflects the steady progress being made since the October MMAC meeting when 54% of the hub preconstruction tasks were complete. Next slide, please. With the 108 hubs Caltrans is designing and constructing, we anticipate that all of the design and environmental work will be complete by September of 2025 and over the next three months, we expect 20 hubs to begin construction. The dots on the map show the system of hubs that will support and optimize the signal strength of the middle mile broadband network. Next slide please. The other area that Caltrans is responsible for is the oversight and permits for the CDT partner builds that are in the state highway right away. This slide is an estimate of the progress being made by the CDT partners to complete the design and environmental tasks required to obtain an encroachment permit from Caltrans. It is estimated that all partners are about 36% complete. Throughout this process, Caltrans continues to engage with the partners and provide support and assistance to help them reach the program goal of construction complete by December 2026. Next slide please. This slide shows what the CDT partners have reported regarding the Caltrans encroachment permit applications. Caltrans understands these permits are critical to the success of the overall project and we continue to work with the CDT partners to

ensure the submitted applications are complete and include the required preconstruction design and environmental tasks. Next slide please. Caltrans recognizes the importance of permits for our partners to connect to the Middle Mile broadband network and has made changes to better accommodate their concerns while staying on schedule. There are four items that I'll be covering on this slide. I will provide an overview of the Caltrans encroachment permit process, discuss progress and successes, increased outreach to partners, and will close with future partner planned engagements. First, there are two processes for obtaining permits through Caltrans, the quality management assessment process and the encroachment permit office process. Both processes result in issuing a permit for access to the state highway right away for construction. A complete application package is required to issue an encroachment permit and includes all design and environmental requirements. Early on in the program, we coordinated closely with our state and federal partners to create streamline approaches to secure permits and approvals. This includes ensuring that the streamline approaches are available to CDT partners as long as certain conditions are met. Second, I will briefly cover the progress and successes. Last year, we partnered with FHWA to develop templates for the master license agreement and the site license agreement. Because we have developed these templates, FHWA is able to quickly review and provide their concurrence. The approved agreements allow CDT partners to come into the state highway system. I want to emphasize that Caltrans offers 4 hours of free consultation to assist applicants and leverage our expertise to streamline the permit prior to submittal. Third, Caltrans has increased outreach to CDT partners. Caltrans has conducted a series of partner engagements to determine where applicants might need additional assistance with application requirements. This includes clarifying SB156 and the environmental requirements. A statutory exemption still needs to satisfy the SB156 criteria and be documented. A statutory exemption only applies to SEQUA, and it does not provide exemptions from other state or federal laws. Use of a NEPA categorical exclusion requires documentation that the criteria has been met. The categorical exclusion does not provide exemptions from other federal laws and regulations. SB156 does not eliminate the need for right away permits from federal Land Management agencies such as Bureau of Land Management, US Forest Service, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Lastly, I will cover the future plan partner engagements. We are setting up a workshop with all CDT partners as well as establishing regular meetings with each individual partner. This will help clarify the environmental requirements right away requirements and provide templates and resources from the middle mile to the last mile. We are continuing to engage our partners and celebrating shared successes as the Middle Mile Broadband initiative progresses. This concludes captions portion of the presentation. Thank you. I'm ready for questions if there's any.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Karam, do any members have questions or comments, Ms. Perrault.

Director Perrault: So I asked this in October when we showed the Q4 pre construction

miles that Caltrans was working towards and it was you know 400 and some odd and I can't remember the exact number. And I remember noting then that that seemed very aggressive. And I'm noting now we're kind of pushing those out a little bit. We're down in Q1 of 2025 so we're pushing those out. And so you know, I appreciate that we're making some progress and I appreciate that you guys have commented that you know the December 2026 deadline is still attainable. But what I'm curious about is that we continue to see those pushed, where are we making up the speed in which we will need to make up some of these things. What's the plan in place to accelerate to still make that final milestone mark? And this won't surprise you from the Department of Finance. Are we still planning to be within our appropriation to get these done?

Elias Karam: Thank you for the question. As you know, as stated in the slides, we still plan to meet the 2026 deadline. We work closely with our contractors to make sure that they can construct these within the agreed upon timelines in the contracts. As stated in the slide, we plan to have all of the design and into the construction phase by March 31st. So I think at the next MMAC we'll have an update on the progress that you're looking for. I'm not sure if that fully answers your question or partly.

Director Perrault: It answers it, but I will state that I'm concerned to see how aggressive that is happening. And I would like to note that I appreciate your oversight with your contractors continues. But I'm curious as to what has been the delay if the plan had been to, and again, I'm only just noting the pre-construction notes, preconstruction numbers. I guess the question is the why. And I understand that you're stepping into the role new, but I think we need to continue to oversight this. From overall project standpoint, obviously we've seen a lot of movement and trying to figure out how best to implement the whole middle mile and what does that look like? And where is it best fit, whether that's with partners, whether that's with Caltrans. And I know it's a combination of both. And I know the conversation around the hubs plays a critical piece as well. But I'm noting that March is not very far away.

Elias Karam: Thank you. And I'll look into that with the team and get back to you.

The Chair: Thank you. And I believe Assembly Member Boerner has a question or comment.

Assembly Member Boerner: I have lots of questions and lots of comments. Thank you so much and thank you for that presentation. So I'm going to start out with asking you to help. When you go back in your slides, I almost stopped you in the middle of your presentation because you went very quickly, and we don't get the slides ahead of time to review. What are the differences when we have deadlines around preconstruction and permitting? Because like Department of Finance, I always agree

with Department of Finance. So this is a very strange thing with me. But if we're delaying permitting now, I do not see how we expend federal funds by the deadline and we did not get a sufficient answer as to how we're going to make it up because construction is construction. So if you could first start with, what are the differences when you look at your timelines that you're giving us on pre-construction and permitting. Because I would assume permitting is part of pre-construction because construction requires a permit.

Elias Karam: I'm not sure if I fully understand the question.

Assembly Member Boerner: So, what's the difference when we look at your slides and you say we have X amount of pre-construction. Does every project that says we have constructed this have a permit and all permits were supposed to be issued, my understanding was December 2024. So we'd be on track for construction.

Elias Karam: Yeah. So I apologize if I went too quickly. I did discuss that we needed additional coordination with our external partners that provide us the approvals to begin construction and those are underway and very close to being approved to allow us to move into the construction phase.

Assembly Member Boerner: So we have slides that show us as committee members when we have pre construction is supposed to be finished, those pre construction projects are being pushed out that means they are not permitted, correct. So preconstruction. Thank you. This is what I wanted to see. Actually. There's another one. What was the one that had blue on it? I'm a visual person. It was blue and it was percentage of tasks and one of the 36 was there, that one. So we look at this, does this mean 36% of projects have all their permits to go forward or is this project tasks within the different permits are 36% complete?

Elias Karam: So I think it's closer to the second one. So there's a lot of permits that are needed from different external agencies, whether they're state or they're federal to issue the encroachment permit from Caltrans. Once Caltrans receives the completed encroachment permit package from all the entities, Caltrans issues the permit within two to three business days. So Caltrans works closely with all of the CDT partners to make sure that their application packages are complete and ready for construction.

Assembly Member Boerner: OK, so when we saw the last middle mile advisory committee, we saw that the deadline for all preconstruction for all projects was December 2024. That means all permits from Caltrans were supposed to be issued by

December 2024. How many permits from Caltrans have been issued? What percentage have been issued from Caltrans to meet that December 2024 deadline?

Elias Karam: So the Caltrans premise depend on all of the.

Assembly Member Boerner: Just give me the number please.

Elias Karam: I will look into that with the team and work with CDT to provide that answer. I don't have the specific data right now.

Assembly Member Boerner: OK, thank you. And does Caltrans management agree that SB156 projects are categorically exempt from CEQA? That was the intent of the legislation.

Elias Karam: It is when the certain criteria is met per SB156.

Assembly Member Boerner: And what criteria would those be for the audience?

Elias Karam: I don't have that memorized in front of me.

Assembly Member Boerner: OK, if you can get that in my office, that would be helpful.

Elias Karam: Thank you.

Assembly Member Boerner: Then what do you believe is causing the confusion at the district level because we were expecting to see all projects done by December 2024? You don't have the number of permits issued to date and that's going to mean we're going to send back federal money and we're not going to build part of the middle map. So I think you can understand that we're all pretty much, I see nodding on the zoom. I can't see the numbers in person, but we're, you can see we're all very concerned as Department of Finance pointed out, if we're delaying the pre-construction, we're risking construction timelines. So how are we going to make it up if we're pushing this back? And it seems like there's non clarity around interagency coordination with these Caltrans permits. Like my understanding was SB156 said you apply for a middle mile, you're a CDT partner, you get streamlining not just for hours of consulting, but you get streamlining under CEQA. And we had a deadline in 2024 that wasn't met. So what do you think is causing the confusion for applicants? What is it that you're hearing at the district level, Sir?

Elias Karam: So I'll say that some parties are further ahead than others. As noted previously, we are signing new agreements with different partners every day. And so we're working with each of those applicants to address our specific challenges and help them get to completed application packages to get into construction. So we're doing consultation with each of the partners as well as statewide information sessions and that should help understand what the challenges are and how we can help them get to completed packages. But ultimately a lot of those deliverables depend on getting approvals from external entities that are not Caltrans. We'll work with them to make sure that their studies and environmental designs meet those expectations of those external entities.

Assembly Member Boerner: Are those permits? I'm not talking about the permits from other entities. I'm talking about Caltrans permits, right.

Elias Karam: The Caltrans permit completely depends on receiving permits from the Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of End Affairs, state and federal agencies like Forest Service. And if those parts of the application are not complete, we will work with them to address any deficiencies and get the application complete.

Assembly Member Boerner: OK, understood. What I would like for the next meeting is for us to take a deep dive into this because if we don't have full permitting of all projects from Caltrans by our next meeting then I do not see how we will realistically make our end of 2026 deadline. It's not going to happen. So I would like to see that broken down. And I also want to say and I would like the breakdown of how many permits have been applied for all those miles that, you know, we look at the orange segments, how many have been fully permitted. And of the 3000 miles of middle mile segments that were reportedly under constructions, how many contractors have begun construction? And I don't want us to count them as the 36% of tasks completed is not a helpful, I can't speak for any of the other committee members, but it's not a helpful metric for me. My milestone is do we have permits. Can we begin construction because every month we push it out we're risking money. And I don't intend to give any money back to the federal government. And so given the gravity of the situation, the risk involved in our goals are not met. I will wait one week and then I will be requesting that the Inspector General of Department of Transportation immediately evaluate whether Caltrans management is accomplishing the department priorities regarding permitting and construction of SB156 projects. And this report which should be on my desk within 45 days from next Friday. The public needs to know that these permits are being issued consistent with the law and direction in SB156 and the Governor's executive order. So I'm really, I'm not getting any money in this situation that we have currently in this country back to the federal government and we need to get on this. Happy to work with you. Happy to do this. But you know, in a week I will be asking that of the Inspector General.

Elias Karam: Thank you for those comments.

The Chair: Thank you, member Boerner. Do any other members have questions or comments? Not hearing or seeing any, so we will move along. Our next update today will be from Golden State Net, the third party administrator, Mr. Erik Hunsinger.

Erik Hunsinger: Thank you Chief Deputy Director Johnson and committee members. Good morning. Next slide please. I'll give a brief update on what we're doing to advance the turnip of the network and then some information on collaborating with FFA awardees. There are three things that are really needed to make a network run. Oh, well, four things. The first thing you need is you need fiber, and you need the infrastructure to support that, the hubs. The second thing you need is to light that with the electronics. And then you need the third thing would be to tie it together with the larger telecom world. That's where you get your Internet access. The fourth thing that you need are customers. We have a unique opportunity in this program because CDT had identified early on that they could purchase an infrastructure on 395 that is, by and large already in place. It requires a bit of updating. Some of the network hubs are a bit below the CDT standards. We're working now to make sure that the proper power supplies and diversity are required to create resiliency. But we can begin lighting that infrastructure in 2025. So this particular slide kind of details that overview of that. If we go to the next slide, it draws out the timeline to get this done in 2025. So already for the network, 60% of the infrastructure is ordered for the electronics, right? We know we're doing construction. We're not waiting for that to finish before we order the electronics because supplies supply chains need to be jump started now. It's a long process and we're working closely with vendors to ensure that we meet the timelines for 2026. But on this particular route, we've already got enough information on the fiber that we can begin configuring the electronics to work on the 395 route. I would like to add that this is at the core of what Cenic engineering has been doing for two decades. So as a reminder, Golden State Net is a wholly owned subsidiary of Cenic, the educational network in California. And so through their, I'll say brain trust for lack of a better term, we're able to leverage their engineering expertise to jump start the process of lighting this network. So we'll begin installing equipment in Q1 and then we will ensuring that that equipment is capable of handling layer two wave capacity and then also providing traffic for Internet access. And then in Q4 we'll tie that to telecom centers in two diverse places. As noted here, Core sight, which is a brand name for a connection in Los Angeles and then Great Oaks is in the Bay Area. That will provide diversity for this route that has not existed previously. And the state of California will be able to test and turn up traffic and actually operate the Internet there. As noted, we won't be quite ready for customers on this route simply because there's certain operational pieces that will not be in place in 2025 to support the needed 24/7 activity. But there is a potential to provide connectivity for any carriers that operate on a dark fiber basis, meaning they won't need a full deep bench of telecom operations in order to function. So if we go to the next slide, please, one of

the requests from the last MMAC was to engage with FFA awardees and we had already been in the process when that was noted. But I wanted to point out that we've already met with 20 of the 37 awardees to help design and optimize the middle mile network for their last mile needs. Meaning, what are their priorities, what are their goals? How do they want to connect to the middle mile network, and what can we do Golden State Net and CDT to prepare for that community to get connected to the network? More work needs to be done. Not everybody's had time to meet with Golden State Net to work out the logistics and the plans there. Many of these organizations are pursuing additional grants, but in short, we already are aware and have mapped out their physical requirements to connect to the network. The majority of these users will not be dark fiber customers across the entire network. They might need a little bit of dark fiber in their region, like 50 miles to service their last mile needs, but they will require LIT service because they don't want to have the operational burden of running infrastructure, let's say from Placerville to the Bay Area. That's too many miles for them to operate. So they'll want LIT infrastructure. And that's what the previous slide kind of laid out is the plan to facilitate that infrastructure so these communities don't have that burden, and they can get broadband into their homes and offices there in their community. And with that, I conclude my presentation. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Hunsinger. Do any members have comments or questions? I'm not seeing any, Miss Alvarado any online? No. OK, thank you very much. So next up are, I'm sorry, Assembly Member Boerner.

Assembly Member Boerner: Sorry I wasn't quick enough to raise my hand and I'm not sure if this was the correct place to ask the question so maybe somebody else can answer. Do we have any segments of the plan middle mile, whether that was lease, joint build, self-build that were planned to go through the area devastated by the LA fires?

Mark Monroe: Yes, sure. I can jump in on this. Our team has looked through that. The only segments that we identified there's a 12 mile section along 405 that is in the east side of the Paradise Fire. And so that's the only overlap of the MMBI network that we found relative to the LA fires at this point. And we're reaching out to find out what the effect might be on our construction contractor there.

Assembly Member Boerner: Thank you. When you find that out, could you maybe share that with all of us?

Mark Monroe: I'm sorry. Yeah, I'm sorry. I said paradise, and I meant Palisades. I'm sorry.

Assembly Member Boerner: It's OK. Sometimes people, people it's fine. If you could let everybody know what that impact might be, that would be helpful. Thank you.

Mark Monroe: Yeah.

The Chair: Thank you, Member Boerner. I'm not seeing any additional questions or comments, so we are going to move along. Our final update before we hear public comment is from Maria Ellis of the Public Utilities Commission, Ms. Ellis.

Maria Ellis: Hi, thank you. Can everyone hear me? All right, so next slide please. I want to start out by just giving an overview of what we're at with some of our SB156 programs and related efforts here. This slide should be very familiar. The table provides a snapshot of the broadband related programs that the CPUC implements. These are last mile programs meant to help support connectivity to the end user and support other efforts such as adoption and technical assistance. I'm actually going to start off here and we're going to go, I'm going to try to hit some of these in a further slide, but just as a quick primer. The loan loss reserve program this aims to enable tribes and local governments and nonprofits to finance broadband deployment and if they need to borrow money to do those efforts and this will help them in that financing. The federal funding account aims to deploy last mile wireline technology infrastructure to every county across the state. The funding is split across multi years, multiple budget cycles, and so while the 2 billion is the total for this grant account, that is not what is currently appropriated. The Broadband Equity Access and Deployment Program, otherwise known as BEAD, is a federal program that the CPUC is administering on behalf of the state of California. The National Telecommunications and Information Administration is a close partner, and this program is really unique in terms of some of the goals which I can touch on later. And lastly, the California Advanced Services Fund, which is actually a suite of programs of six different programs and it's one of our public purpose programs that is funded through surcharge. I'm not going to really focus and speak to this particular suite of programs because I want to focus on some really important updates on the federal funding account and BEAD next slide, please. So as President Reynolds mentioned at the beginning here, we have some great updates as we draw closer to the close of our first round of funding from this program. And as a refresher, we opened and closed the first window of this program for applications closed on September 29th, 2023. We received 484 applications requesting over \$4.6 billion from 63 distinct entities that filed applications. So in December of this last year, 2024, we hit a big milestone of awarding \$1 billion in grants from this account to counties across the state. In addition, yesterday the Commission issued awards of two more counties. So I will provide an update including a verbal update including these awards. So to date, the Commission has now awarded 100 projects and 49 counties and we have 42 projects that are for public entities, 8 projects for tribes, 50 projects to additional Internet service providers. And what is

really, I think, really important in this is to highlight how these programs are going to communities that need the most is that over 50%, about 63% of all the projects are going to majority disadvantaged communities across the state. All in all, these projects that have been awarded to date will deploy approximately 6000 miles of fiber network, last mile fiber network across the state and benefit approximately 2 million Californians. It's worth noting that there's one more tranche that's coming here July, pardon me, January 30th before the Commission. Next slide please. And this slide is meant to just further kind of reflect on some of the accomplishments of this program to date in this first round. These are projects that are not only benefiting areas with large proportions of 100% disadvantaged communities, but they're also all connecting to the middle mile and really were catalyzed by the deployment of this really important investment in the MMBN. So as mentioned, 63% of the overall projects or 63 projects of the total hundred that have been awarded are majority disadvantaged. And so this first project here is with the Karak Tribe Fiber to the home project. This was a \$27 million project, and it will offer both affordable broadband plan for low income customers as well as a low cost broadband plan for all customers and of course they will participate in Lifeline. The Terra Bella project in Tulare County was awarded \$10 million and will benefit small business farmers and suppliers in Central Valley of course also participate in California Lifeline and will offer a low cost broadband plan available to all customers. And lastly, similarly, again, really important project with our partners in Huntington Park also will deploy a low cost broadband plan available to all customers and participate in Lifeline. These projects are you know, you can see the impact in terms of the thousands and hundreds and then in some cases thousands of folks that will benefit from these particular projects. I do want to highlight that the Middle Mile Broadband network has shown to be a crucial component for these projects, catalyzing and enabling these projects to serve disadvantaged communities. Thus far, including the awards made yesterday by the Commission, 53 of the projects of the total 100 plan to connect to the Middle Mile Broadband network. So that's in terms of the number of projects. And then when we're looking at the funding overall, 71% of the funding that was distributed in terms of grants is going to projects that are planning to connect to the MMBN. The types of entities that are connecting to the middle mile from the last mile, these are either awarded or recommended for award. This includes 18 public entities, 7 tribes, one incumbent provider and six new entrants. And the entities are important because the entities may have had multiple applications. So that's how that ends up with a larger number on the total tally. The MMBN has been transformational and has enabled the many federal funding account applications that would not have been possible without this critical state investment. We anticipate that the MMBN will be a beneficial program not just here as we've seen it and with federal funding account but is also a stand-alone economic development catalyst for the State of California that would benefit private industry, public institutions and of course other grant programs such as our BEAD, CASF and other federal programs such as that NTI travel connectivity program. Next slide. Not going to spend too much time or read this quote, but we did want to highlight it. It is from one of our applicants and just the importance of this program, what it means for them and what the Middle Mile particularly has helped do for this grantee. Next slide. This is just a couple more pictures

of us for staff that has participated with grantees. One of these is pictures from Comcast, another one from our partners and Ukiah. And of course, just, you know, lots of smiling faces because it's really fun to be able to help these communities with these grants. Next slide. OK, so next I want to just highlight very quickly on loan loss reserve where we've been and where we're at. The first action here you'll see to the left was implementing the budget act of SB 109, which resized the grant, not grant excuse me, the total pot for the loan loss reserve program to 50 million. So this is implementing that change. The second act of the Commission, which came in November, was awarding that \$50 million to the applicants that had applied by the April deadline. In this case, it was GSCA, Golden State Connect Authority and we're targeting here in early 2025 to do the final which is for the Golden State Connect Authority to identify which project's going to be attaching to its bond. And that will help solidify what will be coming into the next action. Next. Lastly, just want to touch on the BEAD program. These are some of the actions that we've taken throughout and some of the upcoming actions. I'm not going to spend too much time here, but just more for the audience to be aware, since these will get posted, of where we've been and where we're going. I'm going to move us on to the next slide. So before diving into the details here, it's worth noting that State must deliver a final proposal to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration by October 2nd of this year. We received approval for our initial proposal on October 3rd last year and that starts the clock of 365 days to complete our sub grantee selection process and submit our proposal. So this timeline really it's just kind of a very high level look at where we're going and what's coming this year. This program is highly prescriptive, and the main goal is to reach 100% of BEAD eligible locations, which is really unique from the rest of our programs. And then we have to do that with a mix of what is called a priority broadband project, which is 100% end to end fiber project. We can also use other reliable, what is called reliable broadband projects such as for example, cable DSL terrestrial licensed fixed wireless or what is referred to as alternative technology, which could include low Earth orbit satellite. I'm going to draw your attention to the challenge process. We submitted our challenge process results to NTIA. We followed the model challenge process and submitted that to NTIA in November, late November. And we are waiting, we have gone through some curing on our data, but we anticipate a really close, we're drawing closer to being able to have that data verified. And that is important because NTIA must validate the results of our challenge process in order for us to have a final eligibility map for the state that we can begin and that will be the basis for the solicitation. So we believe that we're really close and should have something, some news hopefully this month. And what that will mean after that is we will need to do some conversion on some of the data based on some NTIA guidance, but we hope to have a map up within, you know, even if it's in a provisional nature within the next few weeks. Next is the sub grantee selection process. Excuse me, go back one more time. Didn't mean to say next, next slide. But yeah, next is the sub grantee selection. We've been doing a lot of outreaches since last year, but I do want to note that we will and I'm going to talk about that in the next slide. But I do want to note that this sub grantee selection process is more or less meant to start late Q1 very, you know, possibly maybe very early April, but really targeting towards that late March, April timeline. For now, we will

be providing lots of information to the public so that they're very aware and prepared about how to engage on this. And then that sub grantee selection process will include the pre-qualification, application submission, reviews, negotiations and of course the development of the final proposal. Next slide and this is the last one and want to share that again like we've been doing engagement largely in partnership with CDT starting in 2023, but now really homing in specifically on some targeted audiences and doing CPUC specific engagement. We started a series a 10 part series in December, in early December to help applicants get ready for this program and all of the webinars all have unique topics that relate to sub grantee selection in order to help folks get ready. All of those are recorded and then put on our website. In addition, I will note that we are now doing office hours twice a week that are open to anyone who wants to come. And we just talked about the program that folks are able to ask questions. Those are happening all the time between 1:00 and 2:00 on Tuesdays and Thursdays. And then of course, here are some of the webinars. This is the unique webinar series that we're doing for sub grantee selection. We've done others for a challenge process and other related topics, but this is just this webinar topic. And then we're going to continue to do more and more outreach and really, really encourage people to participate in this because it's going to be the best way to learn how to prepare for this, what is going to be a really fast, fast process. So with that, I'm happy to take any questions and thank you for your time.

The Chair: Thank you. Do any members have questions or comments about Miss Ellis's update? OK, well, I'm not seeing any comments from the members online or in person. Thank you, Miss Ellis. With that, we will move on to public comment. Miss Alvarado, will you please provide the public comment guidelines and begin the public comment period?

Alicia Alvarado: Thank you. In order to ensure everyone who wishes to make public comment has the opportunity to do so, we respectfully request one person per entity and two minutes per person. The order of public comment will be online public comment submissions prior to the meeting. Zoom hands raised. Phone hands raised via *9. We have not received any comments submissions prior to our meeting, so we will start with public comments via Zoom. Please raise your hand and we will unmute. Patrick Messick.

Patrick Messick: Hello, this is Patrick Messick, director of Oakland Undivided. I'd like to thank Deputy Director Hernandez and CDT staff for the improved transparency with local partners and advocates as you embark on the most ambitious Middle Mile project in our nation's history. I'm also really encouraged to hear from many local community oriented ISPs that they've been in discussion with CDT around the MMBI and I want to continue to encourage CDT to reach out to these small community oriented partners. As I've mentioned before on the demand side of this network, we implore the Middle Mile network to offer discounted pricing in California's highest poverty, least connected communities, those deemed uneconomic or low revenue

density by incumbent providers. Offering an incentive structure through pricing will encourage competition that is much needed in these markets. A final note of urgency that's related. Many advocates anticipate that this is the last day for the NTIA to announce the final \$650 million in digital equity competitive grants and with the state only having around \$70 million for the capacity grants. If any of y'all have connections at the NTIA, please encourage them to announce the final \$650 million in competitive awards before the administrative transition on Monday. Thank you so much for your time and looking forward to continued partnership.

Alicia Alvarado: I see no other comments.

The Chair: OK, thank you. Are there any committee members that would like to make any final comments before we close the meeting? Oh, I'm sorry. We have public comment in the room.

Paula Treat: A member of the committee, my name is Paula Treat. I'm a consultant lobbyist with lots of different clients who care about this issue in a big way. I've had Tribes as a client for over 30 years. I will tell you that I love the last mile conversations. I love the fact that there are going to be agreements with other tribes too. Not all tribes are going to do joint management agreements. I mean, they've already been working on broadband for quite a while and at their own expense, but they care about Middle Mile in a big way. I mean, we've had tribal leaders and tribal members who had to take their kids to the local Kmart or whatever it is to sit in the audience with their cars and actually do the homework assignment so their kids could do studies. I will tell you that the encroachment permits are huge if this isn't a uniform system that gets the Caltrans encroachment permits there doesn't seem to be a problem with local encroachment permits, but if we don't get the Caltrans encroachment permits, there won't be a middle mile. So last mile, we'll never get to the tribes. So please take that into consideration.

Alicia Alvarado: Thank you. Are there any other public comments in the audience Seeing none.

The Chair: Thank you. Then I will ask the members once again if there are any comments or questions before we conclude the meeting. Not seeing any or hearing any. So again, I would like to thank you all the committee members, the presenters and attendees for your contributions today. It's a really challenging time for us. As I mentioned in our opening comments, our thoughts are with the LA communities, the residents affected by the fires, the first responders protecting those communities and all of those involved in the response efforts. As we continue the state's important business, we look to that priority for the State of California. Our next meeting will be

Friday, April 18th from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM. With that, we will adjourn today's meeting, and we look forward to seeing everybody in April.