



CITY OF OAKLAND

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September 3, 2021

California Public Utilities Commission
Public Advisor's Office
505 Van Ness Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94102

Re: Senate Bill 156 Communications: Broadband

Dear CPUC Commission,

I am, Loren Taylor, City of Oakland Councilmember for District 6 in East Oakland. I am writing to urge modifications to the priority areas in Senate Bill (SB) 156's CPUC Proposed Middle Mile Fiber Map. According to the CPUC's briefing documents, a key priority is to ensure urban areas benefit from this initiative to help end California's broadband gap. CPUC's Outreach Briefing frames SB 156 as a response to an alarming statistic: almost half of the households without 100 Mbps are in urban areas. This is the case for the constituents I'm honored to serve in Oakland's 6th District. As a third generation Oaklander, and nationally recognized business leader, I have taken a practical and data-driven approach to solving the city's complex issues. The data on my district's digital divide is clear. A recent report by The Greenlining Institute entitled "On the Wrong Side of the Digital Divide" mapped available internet speeds throughout Oakland. It came as no surprise that my district, serving Maxwell Park, Millsmont, Havenscourt, and Eastmont, averaged the lowest access to high-speed internet. This finding should come as no surprise to the Commission either as you have access to publicly available data showing our high concentration of unserved households. Inexplicably, CPUC's proposed Middle Mile network circumvents our entire community, giving preference to the wealthier, more connected communities in Oakland's hills. The Commission must treat internet access as a utility, not as a luxury good, or else it will perpetuate cycles of divestment and wealth extraction from marginalized communities.

SB 156's stated aim is to "connect the unserved, improve quality of service for the underserved, improve statewide network resiliency, and bring down costs for the communities by increasing broadband options." The CPUC commission should promote equity by revising the map to include Route 185 (East 14th / International Boulevard). This revision would factor in the affordability of middle mile services by prioritizing (1) a community's proximity to new fiber



segments, (2) the median wealth or average household income of surrounding families, and (3) the population density within a last mile connection of the proposed fiber segment. International Boulevard bisects an area deemed uneconomic by ISPs, where one or two providers hold a virtual monopoly and thus control the price of service, and where commercial ISPs are unwilling to lease their dark fiber assets.

Open access, high-capacity fiber (488 count) with switches at each major intersection would allow the City to employ its considerable expertise to make last mile fiber to the premises connections or ubiquitous public Wi-Fi, making the greatest progress towards closing the digital divide in our proud city's history. It would also spur competition for last mile infrastructure and create a competitive market that allows my constituents to choose between various provider and business models including community owned, cooperative, and non-profit models that seek to service families at cost.

Middle mile fiber is the key that unlocks access and opportunity in my district. We hope the Commission lives up to the mission of SB 156 and takes steps to bridge the digital divide for good. Thank you, and I welcome the opportunity to discuss how SB 156 can support our most vulnerable communities.

Yours in service,

Councilmember Loren Taylor
Oakland City Council, District 6