



*Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515*

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*Anna G. Eskoo
Eighteenth District
California*

December 1, 2021

The Honorable Marybel Batjer, President
California Public Utilities Commission
505 Van Ness Avenue
San Francisco, California 94102

Dear President Batjer,

I'm writing today to urge the Commission to route its middle-mile broadband network in Santa Cruz County through the Highway 9 corridor for two interconnected reasons: (1) it would provide cost-saving service to unserved and underserved areas; and (2) many residents off Highway 9 do not have meaningful internet access.

As a preliminary matter, I'm not currently aware of any open-access middle-mile broadband infrastructure available through Highway 9. Open-access middle-mile infrastructure serves as a way for rural communities to prevent costly internet provider monopolies and cut costs by providing an intermediary between long-haul and last-mile broadband infrastructure. This effectively cuts costs for last-mile providers, thereby encouraging and better enabling them to ramp up efforts to reach unserved and underserved residences.

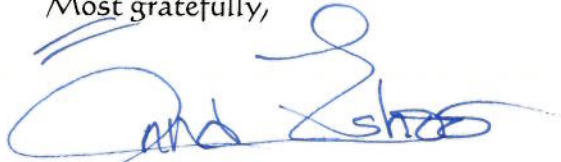
Routing middle-mile broadband through Highway 9 would ensure that broadband services would reach the unserved and highly underserved San Lorenzo Valley (SLV), including the towns of Felton, Bonny Doon, Ben Lomond, Boulder Creek, Zayante, and nearby areas which I have the privilege to represent.

I hear from constituents in the SLV regularly about the need for better internet access, and the lack of it is commonly known in these communities. For example, though the Commission's map suggests that only five households in Bonny Doon are unserved, I've heard from more than five households in just the last three months that have no broadband options in Bonny Doon at all. Many in these communities can't even get DSL which offers speeds far below any definition for broadband.

The negative impacts of this digital divide are myriad, affecting healthcare, schooling, and job opportunities for the people of SLV. Enabling broadband access for residents of SLV by deploying middle-mile infrastructure along Highway 9 could also potentially save lives because many of these residents in this wildfire-prone region cannot reliably receive evacuation orders, download evacuation maps, call 9-1-1, or check on loved ones during natural disasters. These concerns are not just theoretical. I've heard directly from my constituents about each of these issues during the CZU Lightning Complex fires in 2020.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation and your consideration of my request and I look forward to your timely response.

Most gratefully,



Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Members of the California Public Utilities Commission