

Midcoast Community Council

*An elected Advisory Council to the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors
representing Montara, Moss Beach, El Granada, Princeton, and Miramar
PO Box 248, Moss Beach, CA 94038-0248 | midcoastcommunitycouncil.org*

Gregg Dieguez | **Claire Toutant** | **Dan Haggerty** | **Scott Bollinger** | **Gus Mattammal**
Chair Vice-Chair Treasurer Secretary | **Ann Rothman** | **Kimberly Williams**

Date: July 26, 2023
To: Dave Pine, President, Board of Supervisors
Mike Callagy, County Executive Officer
CC: Related Staff, HMB City Council and GM, Cabrillo USD, Sewer Authority
Mid-coastside, Montara Water and Sanitary District; MCC Communications Work Group
From: Midcoast Community Council
Subject: Request Funding for Community Fiber Feasibility Study

In follow-up to our report on telecommunications vulnerabilities Midcoast (ref April 26¹), and discussions with local agencies and our community, the MCC is requesting \$100,000 for a feasibility study of a Community Fiber Network extending from Montara to Moonridge and including the City of Half Moon Bay.

As the report shows, modern communications in our area have been failed by the profit-driven oligopoly of communications vendors, and by our regulatory agencies. A solution is to build our own community fiber network, as has been done hundreds of times across the Nation. Such a network would not only improve internet communications, but would also reduce dependence upon weak and slow cellular phone service by allowing Voice Over IP (VOIP) phone service via the fiber cable. A community fiber network would also help us entice cellular service providers to add sites where they are needed, not just where they are most profitable, because pre-built fiber optic cable installed at the correct locations will ease mobile service providers in adding coverage in areas where it's most needed. The practical benefits of this change are twofold: first, it will increase the safety of residents during emergencies. Second, from an equity perspective, it will increase the availability of broadband access to low-income populations on the coastside, who struggled to have consistent access for their children's education during the pandemic, and who have reduced access to employment or entrepreneurial opportunities now because of inconsistent broadband service.

There are significant funds available for a community fiber effort from both the State and Federal governments. The California Middle Mile Broadband Initiative envisions funding fiber throughout this area. Rep. Eshoo and the Dept. of Commerce announced federal funding on Mon. July 24th at Cabrillo School HQ. But to access those funds, we require legal and administrative capacity to apply for grants, and to oversee a feasibility study of the financial

¹ "Improving Coastside Communication Resilience" April 13, 2023
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1gjkvkdTtcpOR-lhI3JzVZPR2tY9q8I3AW/view>

and engineering parameters of a network here. Hence, our request for funding for the feasibility study, so that we may leverage those funds into greater grants and build a financially self-sustaining community fiber network, as has been done elsewhere.

Note that this funding could be a LOAN to a new legal entity, to be repaid from future revenues of the community fiber agency.

There is urgency to this request, as grant applications are due Sept. 29th of this year. Dozens of other communities statewide have already submitted their requests for similar community fiber networks, as well as the entire County of Marin.

Attached to this letter are endorsements of our findings regarding communications inadequacies from local agencies. HMB City Council has endorsed this concept in meetings as well.

We look forward to a speedy decision so that we may join the rest of the nation in modern connectivity.

Sincerely,

s/Gregg Dieguez, Chair

A PUBLIC AGENCY
SERVING:
City of Half Moon Bay
Granada Community Services Dist.
Montara Water & Sanitary District

SEWER AUTHORITY MID-COASTSIDE

SAM

1000 N. Cabrillo Highway
Half Moon Bay, CA 94019
Phone: (650) 726-0124
Fax: (650) 726-7833

May 8, 2023

To: Midcoast Community Council
PO Box 248
Moss Beach, CA 94037

On behalf of the SAM Board of Directors, I am writing to express my concerns regarding the poor internet connection on the San Mateo Coastsides. As you may know, this issue poses a significant threat to safety and well-being, and residents demand immediate action to address it.

If corporations are unwilling to invest in building better networks for our communities, and regulators will not hold them accountable, then it's up to the communities themselves to take matters into their own hands. By building their own fiber networks, small communities will ensure that they have access to reliable and high-quality internet services that meet their unique needs.

Community leaders can work together to secure grants and funding from various government and private sources to make these projects a reality. We ask our legislators to prioritize the interests of the people they represent and pass laws that encourage and support community-led initiatives to bridge the digital divide.

Our community is taking proactive steps to empower ourselves and ensure that everyone has access to the essential services they need, including reliable internet access. I urge you to prioritize this issue and take action to support community-led initiatives to improve internet connectivity on the San Mateo Coastsides. Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,



Kathryn Slater-Carter
Chair Person



CABRILLO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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SUPERINTENDENT

Sean McPhetridge, Ed.D.

GOVERNING BOARD

Mary Beth Alexander

Lizet Cortes

Carmen Daniel

Kimberly Hines

Sophia Layne

June 27, 2023

RE: Endorsement of Mid-Coast Council Report on Coastside Communications Deficiencies

Please know we write today on behalf of Cabrillo Unified School District to wholeheartedly endorse the Mid-Coast Council (MCC) report "[Improving Coastside Communication Resilience](#)" and its findings regarding telecommunications deficiencies here in this under-resourced part of San Mateo County. As numerous others throughout the region have already noted, our staff and students have experienced significant outages, lapses in coverage, and inadequate speeds which have hampered the work of our teaching staff and the learning experiences of our students. Thus, we agree with the MCC report's assertion that we are deficient in our telecommunications infrastructure as a region, and we also agree that we could benefit from attention paid by the County of San Mateo to address this concern.

In under-served communities like ours, and especially considering that Cabrillo Unified School District is underfunded compared to other public school districts in San Mateo County, even when we have provided devices for students to use, our pupils and families have frequently been unable to keep up with classroom assignments and homework due to poor communications services. This was most apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic when students suffered from erratic cellular coverage and/or simply lacked (or could not afford) internet service in their homes and neighborhoods. Furthermore, communications failures have been reported to us as health and safety issues for parents, students, and staff alike when storms and other service-hampering events have impaired our ability for timely action and response. As a result, we have needed to purchase emergency walkie-talkies for some classroom teachers who must have a fail-safe option for communication in case we have a lockdown or other serious safety concern. This is not a reliable or safe way for us to operate in our schools.

While we gratefully and eagerly await longer-term strategic planning to be developed through the anticipated process for the Coastside Resiliency Infrastructure Strategic Plan (CRISP), we ask that elected representatives and staff of the County of San Mateo take time to urgently review the lack of services we experience here in parts of the Coastside and take quick action to improve the reliability and the performance of communications services in these impacted areas in the meantime. Please know we are intrigued by the concept of a Community Fiber Network mentioned in the report above, and we ask the County of San Mateo to fund a feasibility study in order to explore the viability of such an approach. We understand this would need to be a multi-year effort, and so we believe this is the reason to begin immediately considering health and safety impacts on our children, families, and staff.

We thank you for your attention to this community need in our under-resourced area of the County. Please know we hope you consider our request to explore the report made by the Mid-Coast Council.

Sincerely,

Sean McPhetridge, Superintendent, Cabrillo Unified School District

Sophia Layne, President, Cabrillo Unified School District Board of Education

Los Listos Preschool • Alvin S. Hatch Elementary • El Granada Elementary • Forallone View Elementary • Kings Mountain Elementary
Cunha Intermediate School • Half Moon Bay High School • Pilarcitos High School & Alternative Education • La Costa Adult School



Montara Water & Sanitary District

Serving the Communities of Montara and Moss Beach

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5/24/2023

To: Midcoast Community Council
PO Box 248
Moss Beach, CA 94037

On behalf of Montara and Water Sanitary District, I would like to address the issues surrounding our frequent internet outages. As a public agency, we provide essential water and sewer services. Our operations require consistent communication and networking between vendors, consultants, and our staff. In particular, our districts SCADA system, which automatically turns pumps on according to water levels in tanks, is dependent on stable internet.

Lately it seems that corporations are relatively unwilling to invest in creating securer networks for our communities. With this said, our communities would like to be self-supportive by building their own fiber networks and taking these issues on themselves. This would ensure accessible and high-quality internet to our community members.

Community leaders are ready and willing to work together to bring this project to fruition by securing grants and funding from various government and private sources. We encourage our legislators to support our community-led initiatives in solving and securing this greater internet issue.

Internet must be accessible and reliable for everyone here in Montara, as everyone in our community has matters requiring them to connect and tune in to the world online. I sincerely ask that you prioritize our message and take this issue into action to improve our internet connectivity collectively.

Sincerely,

Clemens Heldmaier
General Manager
MWSD