



CITY OF HUNTINGTON BEACH

City Council Meeting – Council Member Items Report

To: City Council
Casey McKeon, City Council Member

From: Gracey Van Der Mark, Mayor
Tony Strickland, City Council Member

Date: October 1, 2024

Subject: **LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR AVX NETWORK'S FEDERAL FUNDING ACCOUNT GRANT APPLICATION: DIGITAL EQUITY FOR AVALON, CATALINA ISLAND, AND SURROUNDING WATERWAYS**

ISSUE STATEMENT

We met with Digital Equity Foundation about the possibility of embarking on a partnership to bring additional broadband infrastructure to the City of Huntington Beach with connectivity and bandwidth to Catalina Island. Presently, our city has less than one quarter of the wholesale fiber available per square mile compared to neighboring communities across the 405 freeway, with marginal access to long haul, middle mile, or metro area networks. Installing this new subterranean infrastructure along Pacific Coast Highway will not only supply Catalina Island, it will bring fiber landings in our city and bring more connectivity to the underserved beach communities near Pacific Coast Highway and Beach Boulevard as highlighted within the latest FCC Broadband Data Collection and the California Public Utilities Commission's Federal Funding Account maps.

This new “hub” in our city is an opportunity for countless future economic benefits, including and among others, attracting new business, including new events near the pier and additional support to our business, including additional support for existing large business and also attracting new businesses. In order to further this opportunity, I am requesting the City provide a letter of support to Digital Equity Foundation and AVX Network's Last Mile Federal Funding Account's application: “Digital Equity for Avalon, Catalina Island, and Surrounding Waterways” currently pending before the Public Utilities Commission.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

City Council support the AVX Network's Last Mile Federal Funding Account application: Digital Equity for Avalon, Catalina Island, and Surrounding Waterways, and authorize the Mayor to send a letter of support on behalf of the City of Huntington Beach.

ENVIRONMENTAL STATUS

Not Applicable – Administrative Item

STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL

Non Applicable - Administrative Item

ATTACHMENT

1. Draft Letter – Support for AVX Network’s Federal Funding Account Grant Application: Digital Equity for Avalon, Catlina Island, and Surrounding Waterways



CITY OF
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Gracey Van Der Mark | Mayor

October 2, 2024

Alice Reynolds, President
California Public Utilities Commission
505 Van Ness Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94102

Subject: Support for AVX Network's Federal Funding Account Grant Application: Digital Equity for Avalon, Catalina Island, and Surrounding Waterways

Dear President Reynolds and Honorable Commissioners,

The City of Huntington Beach offers its emphatic support for the proposed Digital Equity Foundation and AVX Network's Last Mile Federal Funding Account application: "Digital Equity for Avalon, Catalina Island, and Surrounding Waterways." For too long our region's coastal areas have suffered from want of better communications infrastructure, including, and especially reliable broadband. This has affected our city as well as Catalina Island. Our city has less than one quarter of the wholesale fiber available per square mile compared to neighboring communities across the 405 freeway, with marginal access to long haul, middle mile, or metro area networks in most of our city.

In addition to the benefits this new broadband project will bring to Catalina, having the fiber landings in our City brings more connectivity to the underserved beach communities near Pacific Coast Highway and Beach Boulevard as highlighted within the latest FCC Broadband Data Collection and the Commission's Federal Funding Account maps. Because of the water, wetlands, and historic oilfield features of our city, there are numerous areas where communications infrastructure deployment simply ceased or never kept up with those of surrounding communities.

Huntington Beach has several areas which score low on the Commission's Equity rubric for Disadvantaged, low income, and at the top 25th percentile of Calenviroscreen 4.0. With little to no open access fiber in our city, it will be difficult for our city, county, and other agencies to offer subsidized internet access and the accompanying digital equity programs.

This broadband project in our City also has the potential to provide greater opportunities for business, not only near and around the downtown area and Huntington Beach Pier, but with great potential to provide more business incentives and opportunities to our current businesses such as Amazon. With the increased broadband infrastructure located here, the City will be in a greater position to compete effectively to fill the void in jobs, and tax revenue lost with the departure of Boeing. We are hopeful to offer an alternative



CITY OF
HUNTINGTON BEACH

landing location for international cables, like those in Eureka, Grover Beach, Hermosa Beach, and others, and that these networks will bring added benefit to the connectivity and economy of Southern California.

The ability for this project to meet the California Middle Mile Project in Huntington Beach, will only further enhance connectivity throughout our City and areas throughout our region.

We ask that you strongly consider this application for the benefits it will bring to both Huntington Beach, and Catalina Island subject, of course, to any permitting and environmental requirements.

Sincerely,

Gracey Van Der Mark