News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 6, 2023

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SCAG adopts Digital Action Plan to help jurisdictions eliminate barriers that have left 1.7 million Southern Californians without adequate internet access

Los Angeles – The nation's largest metropolitan planning organization approved a comprehensive plan on Thursday to help 191 cities and six counties bridge the digital divide and increase broadband access in underserved communities throughout Southern California.

The Digital Action Plan, adopted Thursday by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) Regional Council, lays out a roadmap to ensuring broadband access for all. This plan is part of SCAG's work to elevate the region and provide resources to empower local jurisdictions to work toward regional solutions.

Today, 9% of Southern Californians – more than 1.7 million people – do not have access to adequate internet speeds or have no internet access whatsoever. These households are disproportionately located in low-income or rural areas, where the population is predominantly Black, Latino or over 65 years old.

"Broadband has become essential infrastructure for the 21st century, but far too many people – particularly those in low-income communities – continue to be left out. Closing the digital divide is critical to addressing economic and social disparities across Southern California and ensuring the economic viability of our region as a whole," said SCAG Regional Council President Jan Harnik.

The Digital Action Plan adopted by SCAG's Regional Council is built on four key strategies:

o **Seek and secure broadband funding** for local jurisdictions and stakeholders to deploy broadband infrastructure, digital devices, and advance digital equity initiatives.
o **Coordinate, collaborate and build partnerships** with public agencies, local jurisdictions, partners and the public, and align work efforts to collectively bridge the digital divide.
o **Advocate for better data**, Southern California's fair share in funding, open access to broadband networks and assist low-income and rural households in underserved and unserved communities.
o **Gather data and gain knowledge** through broadband technical and strategic studies, disseminate findings and inform decision makers and the public.

The plan culminates more than two years of strategic and technical work by SCAG staff and partner organizations following the Regional Council's commitment, in February 2021, to closing the digital divide. Among the state and federal funding opportunities that have become available since then

include California's Broadband Budget Bill (AB/ SB 156), which commits $6 billion to broadband, and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, which commits $65 billion toward broadband expansion.

In addition to supporting local jurisdictions in their effort to secure funding from these and other sources, SCAG will work with nonprofits and community-based organizations to fund and develop digital literacy programs for children, seniors and immigrants; assist in developing marketing materials to help underserved households gain federal subsidies for affordable broadband subscriptions; develop templates that can be readily adopted by local jurisdictions within the region to streamline broadband permitting; and develop a digital literacy toolkit, identifying priority issues and solutions to solve the digital literacy problems facing many Southern Californians.

The Digital Action Plan also addresses the role broadband technology will play in shaping land-use development patterns, transportation planning, the future of goods movement, regional economic strategies, the development of smart cities and addressing the housing shortage – all foundational to SCAG's role as the metropolitan planning organization for a region of nearly 19 million people. One early opportunity to incorporate digital planning is the next version of the Connect SoCal Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy – a comprehensive plan for the future, updated every four years.

"Just about any future challenge or opportunity will require everyone in our region have access to digital infrastructure. Our plan is to integrate our Digital Action Plan into all that we do, and to support our local jurisdictions as they do the same," said SCAG Executive Director Kome Ajise.

COUNTY	TOTAL POPULATION	WITH BROADBAND	WITHOUT BROADBAND	WITHOUT BROADBAND (%)	WITHOUT DEVICE	WITHOUT DEVICE (%)
Imperial	170,517	149,865	20,652	12%	11,412	7%
Los Angeles	9,858,119	8,824,138	1,033,981	10%	388,863	4%
Orange	3,126,693	2,931,456	195,237	6%	71,198	2%
Riverside	2,399,905	2,204,195	195,710	8%	72,686	3%
San Bernardino	2,110,605	1,901,118	209,487	10%	63,346	3%
Ventura	832,500	761,388	71,112	9%	34,249	5%
SCAG Region	**18,498,339**	**16,772,160**	**1,726,179**	**9%**	**641,754**	**3%**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016-2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Read the complete Digital Action Plan on scag.ca.gov.

About SCAG
SCAG is the nation's largest metropolitan planning organization, representing six counties, 191 cities and nearly 19 million residents. SCAG undertakes a variety of planning and policy initiatives to plan for a livable and sustainable Southern California now and in the future. For more information about SCAG, please visit: www.scag.ca.gov.