

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

**Communications Division
Broadband Regional Initiatives Branch**

**RESOLUTION T-17826
July 11, 2024**

RESOLUTION

RESOLUTION T-17826: Approves six applications for grants for up to \$44,124,665 from the Last Mile Federal Funding Account in Imperial, Lassen, and Plumas counties, providing service to 3,470 unserved locations.

I. SUMMARY

This Resolution recommends approval of six Last Mile Federal Funding Account grants in the amount of up to \$44,124,665.

This Resolution is the first in a series approving grants to Federal Funding Account applicants for broadband infrastructure projects serving unserved areas in California. Subsequent Resolutions will be presented for Commission vote as Communications Division Staff completes its analyses of applications.

The six projects in this Resolution propose to make investments bringing the social, economic, civic, and public safety benefits of high-speed broadband to 3,470 unserved locations and an estimated unserved population of 8,267 in Imperial, Lassen, and Plumas counties. A total population of 25,247 people will benefit from these investments as households and businesses that already have service in these communities will benefit from greater customer choices in the broadband market. The last-mile connections funded by these grants build upon the state-owned open-access Middle Mile Broadband Initiative and the publicly-funded open-access middle-mile infrastructure set forth in Decision (D.) 21-03-006. An estimated 77 percent of the locations that would receive service are located in low-income areas and 44 percent are located in disadvantaged areas.

The recommended projects would be built by two entities: Golden State Connect Authority (GSCA) and Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications. Golden State Connect Authority is a Joint Powers Authority formed by member counties, including Imperial. Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications is an Internet Service Provider owned by Plumas-Sierra Rural Electric Cooperative, operating in parts of Plumas, Lassen, Sierra and Nevada counties.

Staff recommend the following six grant applications for Commission approval as shown in Table 1 below. Maps and summaries associated with each project are in the appendices.

Table 1: Summary of Grant Funding

Applicant	Project Name	Estimated Unserved Population	Estimated Unserved Locations	Awarded Amount
Imperial County				
Golden State Connect Authority	Imperial County Broadband Network	5,622	1,872	\$13,834,949
Subtotal		5,622	1,872	\$13,834,949
Lassen County				
Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications	PST Doyle-Herlong	901	505	\$6,763,583
Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications	PST Janesville-Milford	575	259	\$7,804,046
Subtotal		1,476	764	\$14,567,629
Plumas County				
Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications	PST Mohawk Vista-C Road	390	307	\$6,596,052
Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications	PST LaPorte-Greenhorn	410	280	\$5,501,167
Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications	PST Iron Horse-Valley Ranch	369	247	\$3,624,868
Subtotal		1,169	834	\$15,722,087
Grand Total		8,267	3,470	\$44,124,665

II. BACKGROUND

California's multi-year broadband investment package established the last mile Federal Funding Account as part of the Budget Act of 2021 and Senate Bill (SB) 156¹ and invested \$2 billion in the program over multiple years. The Federal Funding Account funds the construction of last-mile broadband infrastructure projects in unserved areas of California. The Federal Funding Account encourages the deployment of broadband throughout the State to enable the public to access Internet-based safety applications, telehealth services, emergency services, and to allow first responders to communicate with each other and collaborate during emergencies.

On April 21, 2022, the Commission issued D. 22-04-055, Decision Adopting Federal Funding Account Rules. The rules and guidelines adopted in that decision included, among other items, the following: rules about projects benefit Environmental and Social Justice Communities, affordable offers, five and ten-year price commitments, low-cost plans, project eligibility, application requirements, application objections, allocation of funding between rural and urban counties, process to reimburse grantees, a ministerial review process whereby Communications Division Staff may approve certain projects, and minimum performance standards for grantees.

The Federal Funding Account Decision and Appendix specify additional consideration for disadvantaged communities or Environmental and Social Justice (ESJ) communications.² The CPUC made available on the Federal Funding Account Public Map,³ the Applicant Tool,⁴ and data downloads locations and census blocks meeting these definitions.⁵ A grant application window was opened on June 30, 2023, and closed

¹ Statute 2021, Chapters 84 and 112

² The CPUC Environmental and Social Justice Action plan includes definitions and data indicators for disadvantaged or ESJ communities including Disadvantaged Communities defined by the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) and low-income households defined as household incomes below 80 percent of the area median income. The CPUC's ESJ Action Plan 2.0 is available at: <https://www.cpuc.ca.gov/-/media/cpuc-website/divisions/news-and-outreach/documents/news-office/key-issues/esj/esj-action-plan-v2jw.pdf>

³ The Federal Funding Account Public Map is available at: <https://federalfundingaccountmap.vetro.io/>

⁴ Registration for the Federal Funding Account Applicant Tool is available at: [FFA Applicant Tool Registration](#)

⁵ Disadvantaged or ESJ communities and individual locations, for purposes of the Federal Funding Account, include those in Disadvantaged Communities census tracts as defined by CalEPA and low-income areas in which the census block group median household income is 80 percent of the higher of the county or state average. This data is available for download on the Federal Funding Account Public Map page (visited April 26, 2024), <https://www.cpuc.ca.gov/industries-and-topics/internet-and-phone/broadband-implementation-for-california/last-mile-federal-funding-account/ffa-public-map> and the Federal Funding Account Application Resources Page (visited April 26, 2024),

at 4 p.m. on September 29, 2023; 484 applications were submitted. Application summaries were posted on October 23, 2023, and a 28-day objection period closed on November 20, 2023. Responses to objections were received until December 20, 2023.

Applications were holistically evaluated for required and supporting documentation and the merits of the applications were compared, and assessed, on a county basis. Following an initial analysis, Staff sent a data request to applicants and requested additional information. Staff's holistic evaluation included project engineering, technical feasibility and design, financial viability, applicant capacity, and community need, among others. Staff assessed how to manage overlapping applications and applications planning to include some already-served areas in their project area.⁶ Staff also evaluated how applications and groups of applications compared to competing applications in the same county.

III. APPLICATION SUMMARIES, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This Resolution is the first in a series approving grants to Federal Funding Account applicants for broadband infrastructure projects serving unserved areas in California. Subsequent Resolutions will be presented for Commission vote as Communications Division Staff completes its analyses of applications.

Imperial County Summary

The allocation for projects in Imperial County in D. 22-04-005 is \$13,953,151. This Resolution recommends awarding one grant to Golden State Connect Authority for a project in Imperial County. The recommended grant amount is \$13,834,949, leaving a remainder of \$118,202 of the allocation for projects in Imperial County.

Imperial County Awards

1. *Golden State Connect Authority, GSCA Imperial County Broadband Network*

Staff recommends the Commission approve Golden State Connect Authority's application for a grant of up to \$13,834,949 for the GSCA Imperial County Broadband Network.

<https://www.cpuc.ca.gov/industries-and-topics/internet-and-phone/broadband-implementation-for-california/last-mile-federal-funding-account/ffa-application-resources-page>.

⁶ D.22-04-055 states that "households and businesses with an identified need for additional broadband infrastructure do not have to be the only ones in the service area served by an eligible broadband infrastructure project. Indeed, serving these households and businesses may require a holistic approach that provides service to a wider area, for example, in order to make ongoing service of certain households or businesses within the service area economical."

Golden State Connect Authority proposes serving 1,872 unserved locations and an estimated unserved population of 5,622. An estimated population of 22,531 will benefit from these investments in and around the communities of Calipatria, Niland, Ocotillo, and Seeley. The last-mile fiber project will provide up to 10 gigabits per second symmetrical service to consumers.

The GSCA Imperial County Broadband Network will benefit disadvantaged or Environmental and Social Justice communities; 82 percent of the unserved locations in the project area are designated Disadvantaged Communities. Golden State Connect Authority has committed to maintaining its prices for at least 10 years.

The proposed project will cost an estimated \$23 million, of which the Federal Funding Account will fund approximately 61 percent of costs. Golden State Connect Authority plans to issue tax-exempt bonds to fund the balance.

Staff determined that the applicant and the project are financially viable, and the applicant's engineering meets the program standards. The applicant has demonstrated that it has the administrative, technical, and operational capacity to provide broadband service at the scale of this project.

This application received one objection from a provider claiming to serve locations in the proposed project area. Staff verified that the objector provides service in part of the proposed project area. Staff determined that the project cannot viably serve two dense unserved mobile home parks without also serving the area where the objector provides a competing service. Staff has not modified the applicant's proposed project area, based on the Federal Final Rule⁷ and D. 22-04-055,⁸ which allow projects serving unserved locations to include served locations to improve project viability.

No Federal Funding Account Public Map comments were submitted in Imperial County.⁹ The GSCA Imperial County project area's unserved locations and any objection locations were evaluated in light of the latest Federal Communications Commission and Federal Funding Account unserved data (as of June 30, 2023). In response to objections and this data, the number of unserved locations has been revised to 1,872, the project area is unchanged, and the total grant amount is unchanged.

⁷ Department of the Treasury, Final Rule, Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds, 31 C.F.R. Part 35, 87 FR 4338-4454 (January 27, 2022) (Final Rule), available at: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/01/27/2022-00292/coronavirus-state-and-local-fiscal-recovery-funds>.

⁸ D.22-04-055, Appendix A, Section 2, page A-5.

⁹ See Federal Funding Account Public Map, <https://federalfundingaccountmap.vetro.io/> (visited April 28, 2024).

Imperial County Executive Officer Robert Figueroa submitted a letter of support for this project.

The proposed project will provide the public safety benefits of reliable broadband infrastructure. This project is not located in a High Fire Threat District and presents no safety concerns. This project will connect to the open-access Middle Mile Broadband Initiative.

Based on the information received, the Commission's Energy Division has determined that this project has not met the requirements of California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) categorical exemption at this time. Golden State Connect Authority must comply with the CEQA requirements discussed in the appendices. If Golden State Connect Authority provides additional documentation sufficient to justify a staff determination of CEQA exemption, then the project can be exempted by letter from the Communications Division Director or the director's delegate or designee.

Golden State Connect Authority and the GSCA Imperial County Broadband Network comply with all requirements for approval in D. 22-04-055. The Communications Division recommends that the Commission approve Golden State Connect Authority's application for a grant of up to \$13,834,949 for the GSCA Imperial County Broadband Network.

Lassen County Summary

The allocation for projects in Lassen County in D. 22-04-005 is \$24,906,799. This Resolution recommends awarding two grants to Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications for projects in Lassen County. The recommended grant amount is \$14,567,629, leaving a remainder of \$10,339,170 in the allocation for additional projects in Lassen County.

Lassen County Awards

1. Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications, PST Doyle-Herlong

Staff recommends the Commission approve Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications' application for a grant of \$6,763,583 for the PST Doyle-Herlong project.

Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications proposes serving 505 unserved locations and an estimated unserved population of 901. An estimated population of 901 will benefit from these investments in and around the communities Doyle and Herlong. The last-mile fiber project will provide up to one gigabit per second symmetrical service to consumers.

The PST Doyle-Herlong project will benefit disadvantaged or Environmental and Social Justice communities; 100 percent of the unserved locations in the project are low-income. Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications has committed to maintaining its prices for at least 10 years, and will provide a low-cost plan that meets the requirements in D.22-04-055, Section 3.

The proposed project will cost an estimated \$7 million, of which the Federal Funding Account will fund 100 percent of costs.

Staff determined that the applicant and the project are financially viable, and the applicant's engineering meets the program standards. The applicant has demonstrated that it has the administrative, technical, and operational capacity to provide broadband service at the scale of this project. In accordance with D. 22-04-055, the proposed project area is unserved.

This application did not receive any objections.

No Federal Funding Account Public Map comments were submitted in Lassen County.¹⁰ The PST Doyle-Herlong project area's unserved locations and/or any objection locations were evaluated in light of the latest Federal Communications Commission and Federal Funding Account unserved data (as of June 30, 2023). In response to objections and this data, the number of unserved locations is unchanged at 505, the project area is unchanged, and the total grant amount is unchanged.

State Senator Brian Dahle and Chairman of the Lassen County Board of Supervisors Aaron Albaugh each submitted a letter of support for this application.

The proposed project provides the public safety benefits of reliable broadband infrastructure and will benefit locations located in Tier 2 High Fire Threat Districts. This project will connect to Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications' open-access middle-mile infrastructure, which utilized funds from the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and the California Advanced Services Fund.¹¹

Based on the information received, the Commission's Energy Division has determined that this project has not met the requirements of CEQA categorical exemption at this time. Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications must comply with the CEQA requirements discussed in the appendices. If Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications provides additional documentation sufficient to justify a staff determination of CEQA exemption, then the

¹⁰ See Federal Funding Account Public Map, <https://federalfundingaccountmap.vetro.io/> (visited April 28, 2024).

¹¹ See D.21-03-006, Decision Modifying Data Submission Requirements and Requiring Open Access For California Advanced Services Fund Projects.

project can be exempted by letter from the Communications Division Director or the director's delegate or designee.

Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications and the PST Doyle-Herlong project comply with all requirements for approval in D. 22-04-055. The Communications Division recommends that the Commission approve Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications' application for a grant of up to \$6,763,583 for the PST Doyle-Herlong project.

2. *Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications, PST Janesville-Milford*

Staff recommends the Commission approve Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications' application for a grant of up to \$7,804,046 for the PST Janesville-Milford project.

Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications proposes serving 259 unserved locations and an estimated unserved population of 575. An estimated population of 575 will benefit from these investments in and around the communities of Janesville and Milford. The last-mile fiber project will provide up to one gigabit per second symmetrical service to consumers.

The PST Janesville-Milford project will benefit disadvantaged or Environmental and Social Justice communities; 48 percent of the locations in the project are low-income. Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications has committed to maintaining its prices for at least 10 years, and will provide a low-cost plan that meets the requirements in D. 22-04-055, Section 3.

The proposed project will cost an estimated \$8 million, of which the Federal Funding Account will fund 100 percent of costs.

Staff determined that the applicant and the project are financially viable, and the applicant's engineering meets the program standards. The applicant has demonstrated that it has the administrative, technical, and operational capacity to provide broadband service at the scale of this project.

This application did not receive any objections.

No Federal Funding Account Public Map comments were submitted in Lassen County.¹² The PST Janesville-Milford project area's unserved locations and/or any objection locations were evaluated in light of the latest Federal Communications Commission and Federal Funding Account unserved data (as of June 30, 2023). In

¹² See Federal Funding Account Public Map, <https://federalfundingaccountmap.vetro.io/> (visited April 28, 2024).

response to objections and this data, the number of unserved locations is 575, the project area is unchanged, and the total grant amount is unchanged.

State Senator Brian Dahle and Chairman of the Lassen County Board of Supervisors Aaron Albaugh each submitted a letter of support for this application.

The proposed project provides the public safety benefits of reliable broadband infrastructure and will benefit households located in Tier 2 High Fire Threat Districts. This project will connect to Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications' open-access middle-mile infrastructure, which utilized funds from the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and the California Advanced Services Fund.¹³

Based on the information received, the Commission's Energy Division has determined that this project has not met the requirements of CEQA categorical exemption at this time. Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications must comply with the CEQA requirements discussed in the appendices. If Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications provides additional documentation sufficient to justify a staff determination of CEQA exemption, then the project can be exempted by letter from the Communications Division Director or the director's delegate or designee.

Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications and the PST Janesville-Milford project comply with all requirements for approval in D.22-04-055. The Communications Division recommends that the Commission approve Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications' application for a grant of up to \$7,804,046 for the PST Janesville-Milford project.

Plumas County Summary

The allocation for projects in Plumas County in D.22-04-005 is \$42,282,567. This Resolution recommends awarding three grants to Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications for projects in Plumas County. The recommended grant amount for projects in Plumas County is \$15,722,087, which leaves a remainder of \$36,560,480 of the allocation for Plumas County.

Plumas County Awards

1. Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications, PST Mohawk Vista-C Road

Staff recommends the Commission approve Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications' application for a grant of up to \$6,596,052 for the PST Mohawk Vista-C Road project.

¹³ See D.21-03-006, Decision Modifying Data Submission Requirements and Requiring Open Access For California Advanced Services Fund Projects.

Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications proposes serving 307 unserved locations and an estimated unserved population of 390. An estimated population of 407 will benefit from these investments in and around the communities of Mohawk Vista and C Road. The last-mile fiber project will provide up to one gigabit per second symmetrical service to consumers.

The PST Mohawk Vista-C Road project will benefit disadvantaged or Environmental and Social Justice communities; 100 percent of the unserved locations are low-income. Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications has committed to maintaining its prices for at least 10 years, and will provide a low-cost plan that meets the requirements in D.22-04-055, Section 3.

The proposed project will cost an estimated \$7 million, of which the Federal Funding Account will fund 100 percent of costs.

Staff determined that the applicant and the project are financially viable, and the applicant's engineering meets the program standards. The applicant has demonstrated that it has the administrative, technical, and operational capacity to provide broadband service at the scale of this project. In accordance with D.22-04-055, the proposed project area is unserved.

This application did not receive any objections.

No Federal Funding Account Public Map comments were submitted in Plumas County.¹⁴ The PST Mohawk Vista-C Road project area unserved and/or any objection locations were evaluated in light of the latest Federal Communications Commission and Federal Funding Account unserved data (as of June 30, 2023). In response to objections and this data, the number of unserved locations is revised from 309 to 307, the project area is unchanged, and the total grant amount is unchanged.

State Senator Brian Dahle and the Lost Sierra Chamber of Commerce each submitted a letter of support for this application.

The proposed project provides the public safety benefits of reliable broadband infrastructure and will benefit households located in Tier 2 High Fire Threat Districts. This project will connect to Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications' open-access middle-mile infrastructure, which utilized funds from the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and the California Advanced Services Fund.¹⁵

¹⁴ See Federal Funding Account Public Map, <https://federalfundingaccountmap.vetro.io/> (visited April 28, 2024).

¹⁵ See D.21-03-006, Decision Modifying Data Submission Requirements and Requiring Open Access For California Advanced Services Fund Projects.

Based on the information received, the Commission's Energy Division has determined that this project has not met the requirements of CEQA categorical exemption at this time. Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications must comply with the CEQA requirements discussed in the appendices. If Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications provides additional documentation sufficient to justify a staff determination of CEQA exemption, then the project can be exempted by letter from the Communications Division Director or the director's delegate or designee.

Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications and the PST Mohawk Vista-C Road project comply with all requirements for approval in D.22-04-055. The Communications Division recommends that the Commission approve Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications' application for a grant of up to \$6,596,052 for the PST Mohawk Vista-C Road project.

2. Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications, PST LaPorte-Greenhorn

Staff recommends the Commission approve Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications' application for a grant of up to \$5,501,167 for the PST LaPorte-Greenhorn project.

Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications proposes serving 280 unserved locations and an estimated unserved population of 410. An estimated population of 413 will benefit from these investments in and around the communities of North LaPorte Road, Greenhorn, and Cromberg. The last-mile fiber project will provide up to one gigabit per second symmetrical service to consumers.

The PST LaPorte-Greenhorn project will benefit disadvantaged or Environmental and Social Justice communities; 79 percent of the unserved locations are low-income. Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications has committed to maintaining its prices for at least 10 years, and will provide a low-cost plan that meets the requirements in D.22-04-055, Section 3.

The proposed project will cost an estimated \$6 million, of which the Federal Funding Account will fund 100 percent of costs.

Staff determined that the applicant and the project are financially viable, and that the applicant's engineering meets the program standards. The applicant has demonstrated that it has the administrative, technical, and operational capacity to provide broadband service at the scale of this project. In accordance with D. 22-04-055, the proposed project area is unserved.

This application did not receive any objections.

No Federal Funding Account Public Map comments were submitted in Plumas County.¹⁶ The PST LaPorte-Greenhorn project area unserved and/or any objection locations were evaluated in light of the latest Federal Communications Commission and Federal Funding Account unserved data (as of June 30, 2023). In response to objections and this data, the number of unserved locations is revised from 282 to 280, the project area is unchanged, and the total grant amount is unchanged.

State Senator Brian Dahle and the Lost Sierra Chamber of Commerce each submitted a letter of support for this application.

The proposed project provides the public safety benefits of reliable broadband infrastructure and will benefit households located in Tier 2 and Tier 3 High Fire Threat Districts. This project will connect to Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications' open-access middle-mile infrastructure, which utilized funds from the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and the California Advanced Services Fund.¹⁷

Based on the information received, the Commission's Energy Division has determined that this project has not met the requirements of CEQA categorial exemption at this time. Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications must comply with the CEQA requirements discussed in the appendices. If Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications provides additional documentation sufficient to justify a staff determination of CEQA exemption, then the project can be exempted by letter from the Communications Division Director or the director's delegate or designee.

Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications and the PST LaPorte-Greenhorn project comply with all requirements for approval in D.22-04-055. The Communications Division recommends that the Commission approve Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications' application for a grant of up to \$5,501,167 for the PST LaPorte-Greenhorn project.

3. Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications, PST Iron Horse-Valley Ranch

Staff recommends the Commission approve Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications' application for a grant of up to \$3,624,868 for the PST Iron Horse-Valley Ranch project.

Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications proposes serving 247 unserved locations and an estimated unserved population of 369. An estimated total population of 420 will benefit from investments in the Iron Horse and Valley Ranch communities. The last-mile fiber project will provide up to one gigabit per second symmetrical service to consumers.

¹⁶ See Federal Funding Account Public Map, <https://federalfundingaccountmap.vetro.io/> (visited April 28, 2024).

¹⁷ See D.21-03-006, Decision Modifying Data Submission Requirements and Requiring Open Access For California Advanced Services Fund Projects.

The PST Iron Horse-Valley Ranch project will benefit disadvantaged or Environmental and Social Justice communities; 100 percent of the unserved locations are low-income. Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications has committed to maintaining its prices for at least 10 years, and will provide a low-cost plan that meets the requirements in D.22-04-055, Section 3.

The proposed project will cost an estimated \$4 million, of which the Federal Funding Account will fund 100 percent of costs.

Staff determined that the applicant and the project are financially viable, and that the applicant's engineering meets the program standards. The applicant has demonstrated that it has the administrative, technical, and operational capacity to provide broadband service at the scale of this project. In accordance with D.22-04-055, the proposed project area is unserved, and 100 percent of the locations in the proposed project area are considered low-income.

This application did not receive any objections.

No Federal Funding Account Public Map comments were submitted in Plumas County.¹⁸ The PST Iron Horse-Valley Ranch project area's unserved locations and/or any objection locations were evaluated in light of the latest Federal Communications Commission and Federal Funding Account unserved data (as of June 30, 2023).

After applying to the Federal Funding Account, Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications received a grant from Congressionally Directed Spending, administered by the United States Department of Agriculture Rural Utilities Service ReConnect Pilot Program. Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications modified its grant application to exclude locations that will be served by the ReConnect Pilot Program. The modified project area does not include any overlap or duplication of locations amongst the two funding sources.

In response to objections, the latest Federal Communications Commission data, and Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications' revisions, the number of unserved locations is revised from 328 to 247, the project area is reduced, and the total grant amount is reduced from \$7,945,948 to \$3,624,868.

State Senator Brian Dahle and the Lost Sierra Chamber of Commerce each submitted a letter of support for this application.

The proposed project provides the public safety benefits of reliable broadband infrastructure and will benefit households located in Tier 2 High Fire Threat Districts.

¹⁸ See Federal Funding Account Public Map, <https://federalfundingaccountmap.vetro.io/> (visited April 28, 2024).

This project will connect to Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications' open-access middle-mile infrastructure, which utilized funds from the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and the California Advanced Services Fund.¹⁹

Based on the information received, the Commission's Energy Division has determined that this project has not met the requirements of CEQA categorical exemption at this time. Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications must comply with the CEQA requirements discussed in the appendices. If Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications provides additional documentation sufficient to justify a staff determination of CEQA exemption, then the project can be exempted by letter from the Communications Division Director or the director's delegate or designee.

Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications and the PST Iron Horse-Valley Ranch project comply with all requirements for approval in D. 22-04-055. The Communications Division recommends that the Commission approve Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications' application for a grant of up to \$3,624,868 for the PST Iron Horse-Valley Ranch project.

COMMENTS

In compliance with Public Utilities Code Section 311(g)(1), a Notice of Availability of this draft resolution was e-mailed on June 7, 2024, informing all parties on the CASF Distribution List of the availability of the draft of this Resolution, and of the opportunity to comment, at the Commission's website at <http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/>.

IV. COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS

Awardees are required to comply with all the guidelines, requirements, and conditions associated with the grant of Federal Funding Account awards as specified in D.22-04-055. All Awardees are also required to sign a consent form agreeing to the terms and conditions of the Federal Funding Account. Such compliance includes, but is not limited to, the items noted below.

A. Deployment Schedule: All CEQA-exempt projects must be completed within 18 months, and all other projects shall be completed within 24 months after receiving authorization to construct.

B. Pricing: By accepting these awards, the Awardees commit to serve customers in the project area at prices not exceeding those provided in the application for five years after project completion. Awardees who committed not to increase prices for a period of 10

¹⁹ See D.21-03-006, Decision Modifying Data Submission Requirements and Requiring Open Access For California Advanced Services Fund Projects.

years in their application commit to serve customers in the project area for 10 years after project completion. Should the need arise for grant recipients to adjust prices due to externalities outside their control (*e.g.* inflation), grant recipients may file and serve, on the Resolution 20-09-001 proceeding service list, a request to modify this requirement with the Communications Division.

C. Speed and Latency: All households in the proposed project areas must be offered a broadband Internet service plan with speeds of at least 100 megabits per second (Mbps) download and 100 Mbps upload, with not more than 100 milliseconds of latency.

D. Affordability: All projects shall participate in the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) or otherwise provide access to a broad-based affordability program to low-income customers in the proposed service area of the broadband infrastructure that provides benefits to households commensurate with those provided under the ACP. Should the ACP program end, the Commission will identify a successor low-income subsidy program participants must participate in.

E. Project Audit: The Commission has the right to conduct any necessary audit, verification, and discovery during project implementation/construction to ensure that Federal Funding Account funds are spent in accordance with Commission approval. All recipients of federally funded grants exceeding \$750,000 will need to include a budget for a federal audit.²⁰

F. Reporting Requirements: Numerous post-award reports are required. In summary, these include monthly construction progress reports, monthly contractor reports (if applicable), quarterly progress reports, and a final completion report.²¹

G. Prevailing Wage: Section 1720 of the California Labor Code requires Federal Funding Account projects be subject to prevailing wage requirements.²² Applicants accepting Federal Funding Account awards are committing to follow state prevailing wage requirements with regards to their projects.

H. Payments to Federal Funding Account Recipients: The Commission may reimburse Awardees' expenses in accordance with Public Utilities Code Section 281. Requests for payments may be submitted as the project is progressively deployed. The prerequisite for first payment is the submittal of a progress report to the Commission showing that a minimum of 10 percent of the project (as determined by budget spent) has been

²⁰ Treasury, Compliance and Reporting Guidance State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (November 15, 2021 Version 2.1), available at <https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/SLFRF-Compliance-and-Reporting-Guidance.pdf>.

²¹ D.22-04-055, Appendix A, Section 14.

²² D.22-054-055, Section 13.2, page 57.

completed. Subsequent payments may be made upon at least 25-percent intervals, with the final 15 percent payment request (from 85 to 100 percent) not eligible for payment without an approved completion report. Payments are based on submitted receipts, invoices and other supporting documentation showing expenditures incurred for the project in accordance with the approved Federal Funding Account budget included in the awardee's application.

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. California's multi-year broadband infrastructure investments in the Budget Act of 2021 and Senate Bill 156 (Statutes 2021, Chapters 84 and 112) provided \$2 billion over multiple years to the Last Mile Federal Funding Account to facilitate, via reimbursement, construction of last-mile broadband infrastructure projects to connect unserved Californians.
2. On April 21, 2022, the Commission approved Decision 22-04-055, which along with the Federal Final Rule, established the Last Mile Federal Funding Account and set program rules.
3. The Communications Division opened an application window for the Federal Funding Account on June 30, 2023, and closed it on September 29, 2023. Applicants submitted 484 applications before the deadline. Application summaries were posted on October 23, 2023, and a 28-day objection window closed on November 20, 2023. Responses to objections were received until December 20, 2023.
4. Golden State Connect Authority (GSCA) submitted an application for the GSCA Imperial County Broadband Network project on September 28, 2023.
5. Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications (PST) submitted applications for the PST Doyle-Herlong, PST Janesville-Milford, PST Mohawk Vista-C Road, PST LaPorte-Greenhorn, and PST Iron Horse-Valley Ranch projects on September 28, 2023.
6. Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications revised their application for the PST Iron Horse-Valley Ranch project to avoid overlap with a federal grant to serve locations in the original application. The revised application requests \$3,624,868 instead of \$7,945,948 from the Federal Funding Account and will serve 247 locations instead of 330 locations.
7. The Commission has determined that the Golden State Connect Authority's GSCA Imperial County Broadband Network project is not categorically exempt from California Environmental Quality Act review at this time.

8. The Commission has determined that Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications' PST Doyle-Herlong, PST Janesville-Milford, PST Mohawk Vista-C Road, PST LaPorte-Greenhorn, and PST Iron Horse-Valley Ranch projects are not categorically exempt from California Environmental Quality Act review at this time.
9. Communications Division staff analyzed the applications for compliance with Commission and Federal rules, reviewed local feedback, and conducted fiscal and technical analysis.
10. All applications listed above met minimum eligibility requirements provided in Decision 22-04-055.
11. Staff recommends approval of the applications in this resolution, as they comply with program rules as stated and contribute to the Federal Funding Account's goal of building broadband Internet infrastructure to communities without access to Internet service at sufficient and reliable speeds.
12. Draft Resolution T-17826 was emailed to the CASF distribution list on June 7, 2024, in compliance with Public Utilities Code Section 311(g)(1).

THEREFORE, IT IS ORDERED that:

1. The Commission shall award up to \$13,834,949 in Federal Funding Account funds to the Golden State Connect Authority to complete the GSCA Imperial County Broadband Network project, as described in the appendices.
2. The Commission shall award up to \$6,763,583 in Federal Funding Account funds to Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications in order to complete the PST Doyle-Herlong project, as described in the appendices.
3. The Commission shall award up to \$7,804,046 in Federal Funding Account funds to Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications in order to complete the PST Janesville-Milford project, as described in the appendices.
4. The Commission shall award up to \$6,596,052 in Federal Funding Account funds to Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications in order to complete the PST Mohawk Vista-C Road project, as described in the appendices.
5. The Commission shall award up to \$5,501,167 in Federal Funding Account funds to Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications in order to complete the PST LaPorte-Greenhorn project, as described in the appendices.

6. The Commission shall award up to \$3,624,868 in Federal Funding Account funds to Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications in order to complete the PST Iron Horse-Valley Ranch project, as described in the appendices.
7. The Commission cannot release funds for construction activities until California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review is complete. The awardees must comply with the requirements set forth in the CEQA Section of the Resolution. The awardees must provide their Proponent's Environmental Assessment for each project prior to the first payment.
8. Awardee(s) shall comply with all guidelines, requirements, and conditions set forth in this resolution.
9. All construction covered by the grant must be completed within the applicable 18-month or 24-month time frame. In the event of extenuating circumstances jeopardizing this timeline, the Awardee(s) must notify the Communications Division's Director as soon as they become aware of any delay. If such notice is not provided, staff can take corrective actions including reducing payment for failure to satisfy this requirement.
10. If the awardee(s) fail to complete the project(s) in accordance with the terms outlined in Decision 22-04-055 and with the terms of the Commission's approval, as set forth in this resolution, awardees must reimburse some or all the Federal Funding Account grants received or take other corrective action.
11. If staff evaluation finds any of the projects can be exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act, then the project can be exempted by letter from the Communications Division Director or the director's delegate or designee.
12. The effective date of each award and encumbrance of funds is to be set, in consultation with the Applicant, by letter from the Communications Division Director or the director's delegate or designee. All awards are contingent on available state budget appropriations funding and may be subject to Budget Letter 24-07.²³ Grants in this Resolution will not be enforceable commitments unless and until an effective date of award is set and a grant agreement is executed.

²³ Department of Finance Budget Letter 24-07, "Onetime Appropriation(s) Expenditure Freeze Pursuant to Section 21 of the Budget Act of 2023 (As Amended by Section 74 of AB 106 (Chapter 9, Statutes of 2024))," available at: <https://dof.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/352/2024/04/BL-24-07.pdf>

This resolution is effective today.

I certify that the foregoing resolution was duly introduced, passed, and adopted at a conference of the Public Utilities Commission of the State of California held on _____, the following Commissioners voting favorable thereon:

Rachel Peterson
Executive Director

APPENDIX A

Golden State Connect Authority California Environmental Quality Act Compliance Requirements

The following Golden State Connect Authority project is subject to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review:

- GSCA Imperial County Broadband Network

The Commission must complete CEQA review prior to disbursing Federal Funding Account funds for construction activities. The initial funding granted in this Resolution may be used for project development and other Golden State Connect Authority activities that do not involve construction or any activities that would have any direct or indirect effect on the physical environment.

Prior to any construction activity for the listed projects, Golden State Connect Authority is required to seek further authority from the Commission for such activity by filing a Proponent's Environmental Assessment (PEA) pursuant to Commission Rule of Practice and Procedure 2.4; and must undergo an environmental review pursuant to CEQA (California Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq.).

Golden State Connect Authority should contact the Supervisor of the Commission's Energy Division CEQA Unit well in advance of a contemplated filing to (a) consult with staff regarding the process of developing and filing a PEA; (b) provide for cost recovery per Rule of Practice and Procedure 2.5; and (c) enter into a Memorandum of Understanding to allow the Energy Division to initiate the retention of an environmental contractor to perform the environmental review.

Golden State Connect Authority's listed applications are subject to National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review, as acknowledged in its application. Golden State Connect Authority should make every effort to ensure that the Commission's CEQA Unit is aware of and included in the NEPA process. Golden State Connect Authority must provide a PEA prior to the first payment. The Commission cannot release funds for the construction project until the Commission has completed CEQA review.

If staff evaluation finds the projects can be exempt from CEQA, then the project can be exempted by letter from the Commission.

APPENDIX B
Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications California Environmental Quality Act
Compliance Requirements

The following Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications' projects are subject to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review:

- PST Doyle-Herlong;
- PST Janesville-Milford;
- PST Mohawk Vista-C Road;
- PST LaPorte-Greenhorn; and
- PST Iron Horse-Valley Ranch.

The Commission must complete CEQA review prior to disbursing Federal Funding Account funds for construction activities. The initial funding granted in this Resolution may be used for project development and other Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications activities that do not involve construction or any activities that would have any direct or indirect effect on the physical environment.

Prior to any construction activity for the listed projects, Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications is required to seek further authority from the Commission for such activity by filing a Proponent's Environmental Assessment (PEA) pursuant to Commission Rule of Practice and Procedure 2.4; and must undergo an environmental review pursuant to CEQA (California Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq.).

Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications should contact the Supervisor of the Commission's Energy Division CEQA Unit well in advance of a contemplated filing to (a) consult with staff regarding the process of developing and filing a PEA; (b) provide for cost recovery per Rule of Practice and Procedure 2.5; and (c) enter into a Memorandum of Understanding to allow the Energy Division to initiate the retention of an environmental contractor to perform the environmental review.

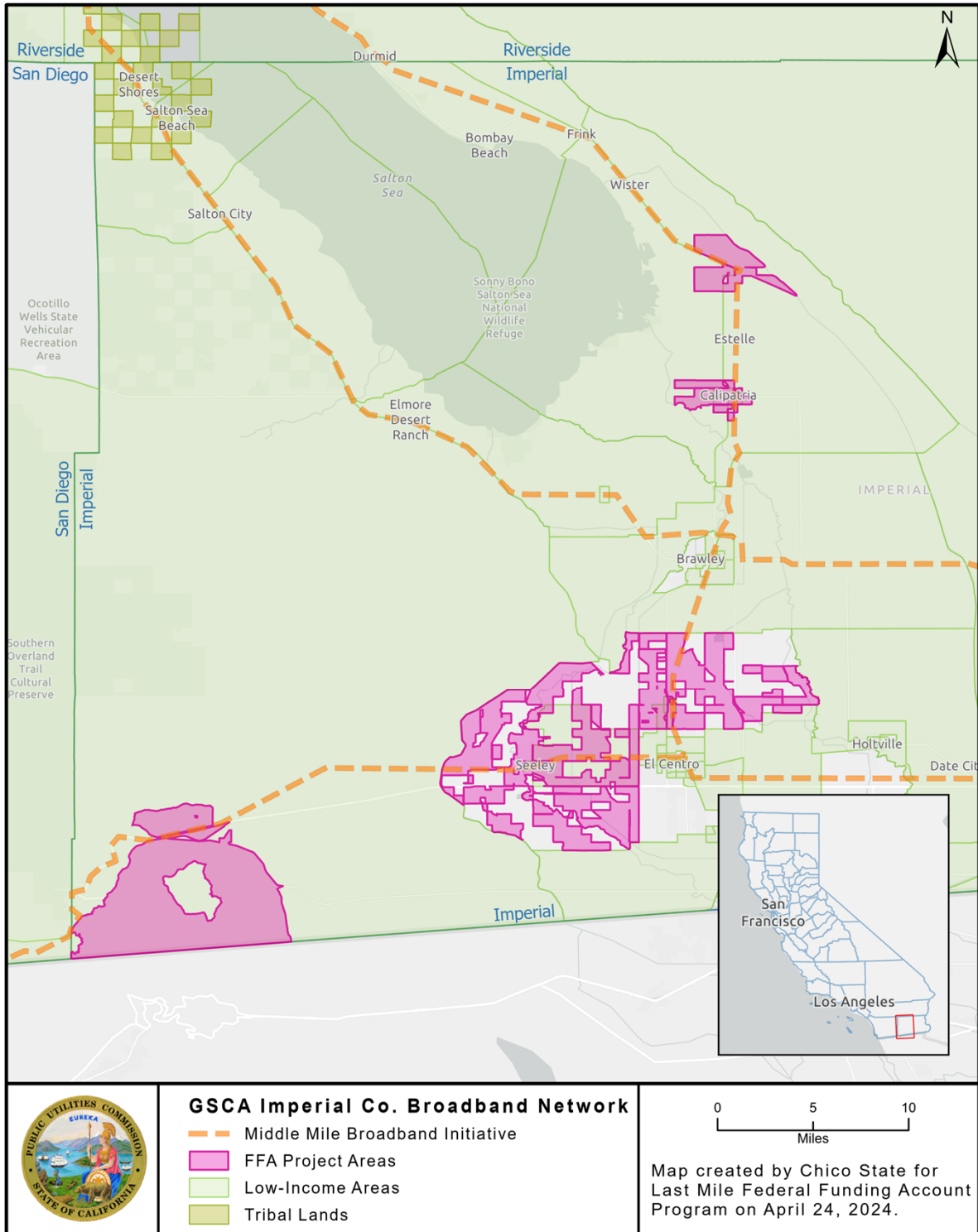
Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications' listed applications are subject to National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review, as acknowledged in its application. Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications should make every effort to ensure that the Commission's CEQA Unit is aware of and included in the NEPA process. Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications must provide a PEA prior to the first payment. The Commission cannot release funds for the construction project until the Commission has completed CEQA review.

If staff evaluation finds the projects can be exempt from CEQA, then the project can be exempted by letter from the Commission.

APPENDIX C
GSCA Imperial County Broadband Network
Key Information

Project Name	GSCA Imperial County Broadband Network
Applicant Name	Golden State Connect Authority
Community Names	Unincorporated Imperial County
County	Imperial County
County Allocation	\$13,953,151
Project Size (in square miles)	229
Maximum Download/Upload speed	Up to 10 Gbps / 10 Gbps
Percent Disadvantaged Communities	81 percent
Percent Low-Income Areas	67 percent
Median Household Income (weighted)	\$47,875
Area Population	22,531
Households	7,140
Estimated unserved population in the project area	5,622
Estimated unserved locations in the project area	1,872
Does the project connect to public open access middle mile?	Yes
Deployment Schedule	18 months
Total Project Cost	\$22,864,949
Amount of FFA grant funds requested	\$13,834,949
Applicant funded	\$9,030,000
Grant per unserved location passed	\$7,390

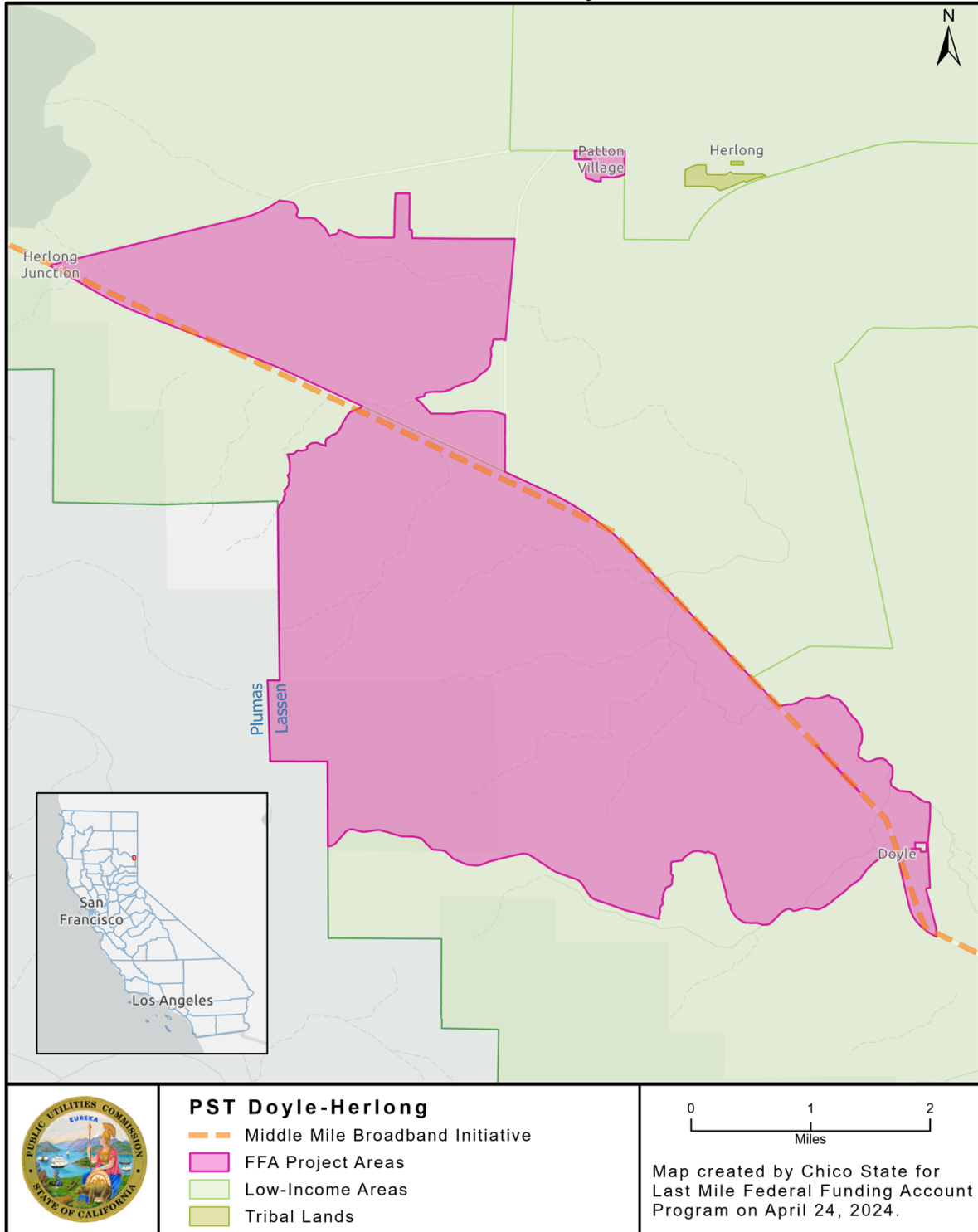
APPENDIX C
Map of GSCA Imperial County Broadband Network
Golden State Connect Authority- GSCA Imperial County Broadband Network
Imperial County



APPENDIX D
PST Doyle-Herlong
Key Information

Project Name	PST Doyle-Herlong
Applicant Name	Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications
Community Names	Doyle and Herlong
County	Lassen County
County Allocation	\$24,906,799
Project Size (in square miles)	45
Maximum Download/Upload speed	Up to 1 Gbps / 1 Gbps
Percent Disadvantaged Communities	0 percent
Percent Low-Income Areas	100 percent
Median Household Income (weighted)	\$62,713
Area Population	901
Households	379
Estimated unserved population in the project area	901
Estimated unserved locations in the project area	505
Does the project connect to public open access middle mile?	Yes
Deployment Schedule	24 months
Total Project Cost	\$6,763,583
Amount of FFA grant funds requested	\$6,763,583
Applicant funded	\$0
Grant per unserved location passed	\$13,393

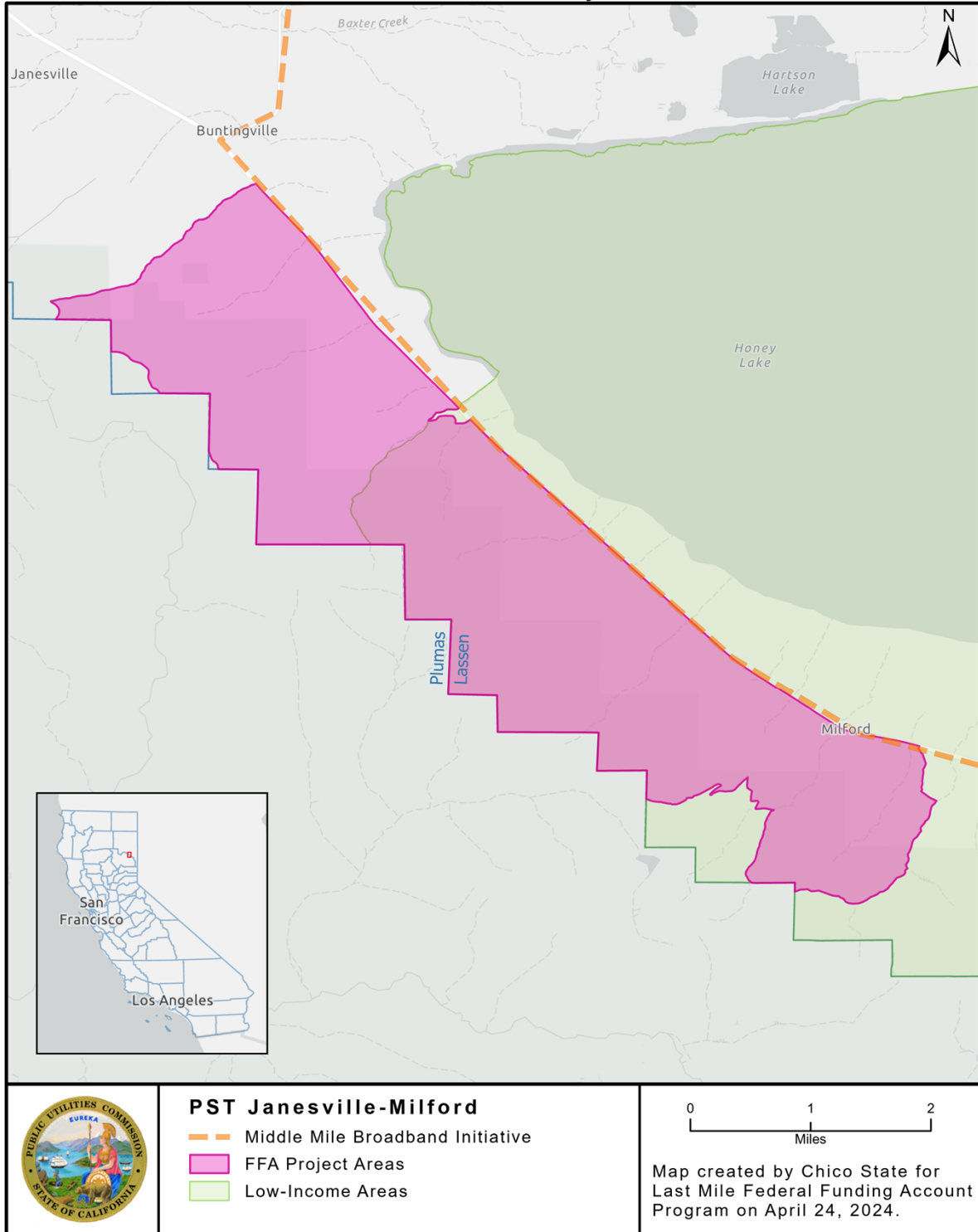
APPENDIX D
Map of PST Doyle-Herlong
Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications- PST Doyle-Herlong
Lassen County



APPENDIX E
PST Janesville-Milford
Key Information

Project Name	PST Janesville-Milford
Applicant Name	Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications
Community Names	Mohawk Vista and C Road
County	Lassen County
County Allocation	\$24,906,798
Project Size (in square miles)	40
Maximum Download/Upload speed	Up to 1 Gbps / 1 Gbps
Percent Disadvantaged Communities	0 percent
Percent Low-Income Areas	47.8 percent
Median Household Income (weighted)	\$50,588
Area Population	575
Households	242
Estimated unserved population in the project area	575
Estimated unserved locations in the project area	259
Does the project connect to public open access middle mile?	Yes
Deployment Schedule	24 months
Total Project Cost	\$7,804,046
Amount of FFA grant funds requested	\$7,804,046
Applicant funded	\$0
Grant per unserved location passed	\$30,131

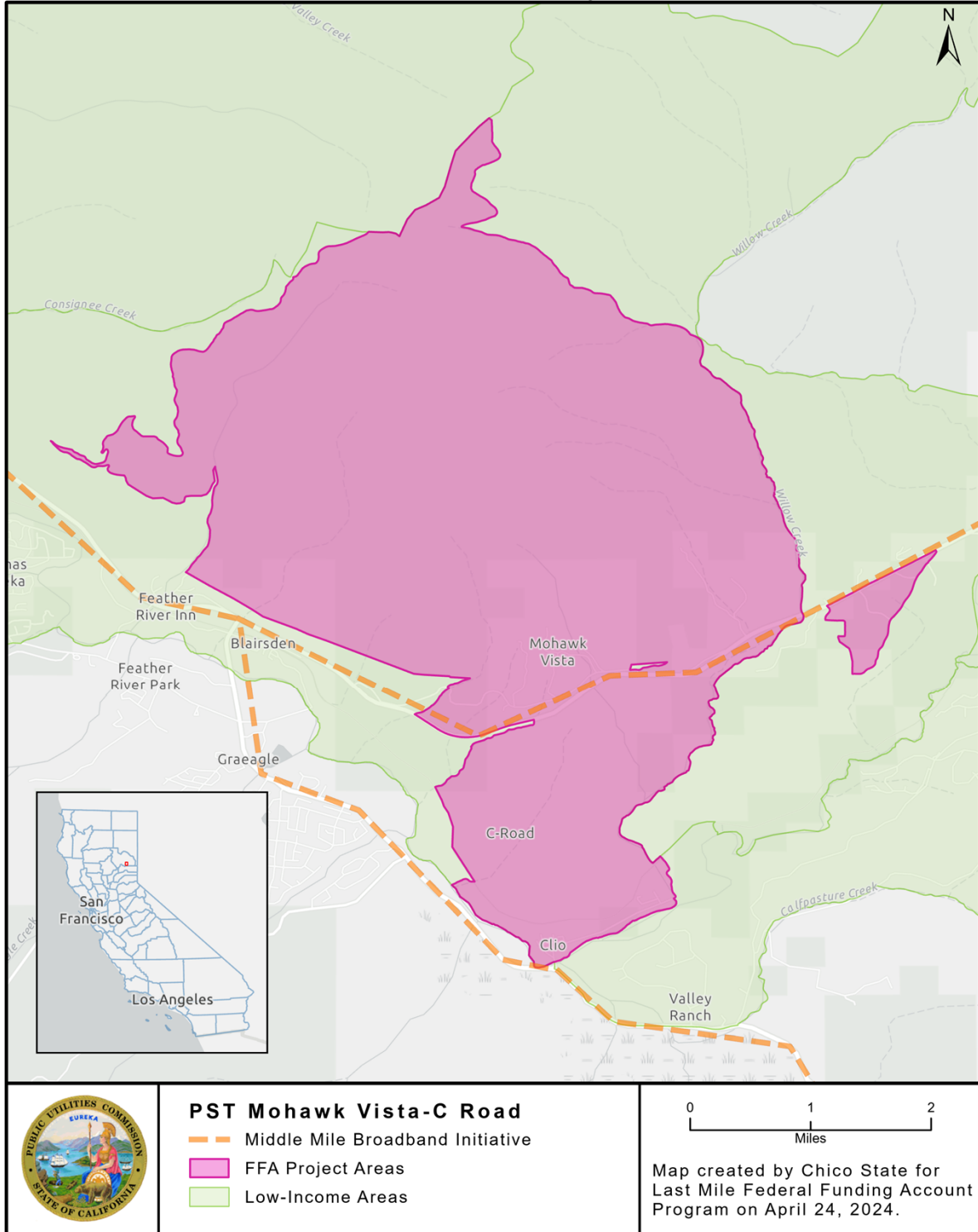
APPENDIX E
Map of PST Janesville-Milford
Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications- PST Janesville-Milford
Lassen County



APPENDIX F
PST Mohawk Vista-C Road
Key Information

Project Name	Mohawk Vista-C Road
Applicant Name	Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications
Community Names	Mohawk Vista and C Road
County	Plumas County
County Allocation	\$42,282,567
Project Size (in square miles)	28
Maximum Download/Upload speed	Up to 1000 Mbps / 1000 Mbps
Percent Disadvantaged Communities	0 percent
Percent Low-Income Areas	100 percent
Median Household Income (weighted)	\$61,313
Area Population	407
Households	209
Estimated unserved population in the project area	390
Estimated unserved locations in the project area	307
Does the project connect to public open access middle mile?	Yes
Deployment Schedule	24 months
Total Project Cost	\$6,596,052
Amount of FFA grant funds requested	\$6,596,052
Applicant funded	\$0
Grant per unserved location passed	\$21,486

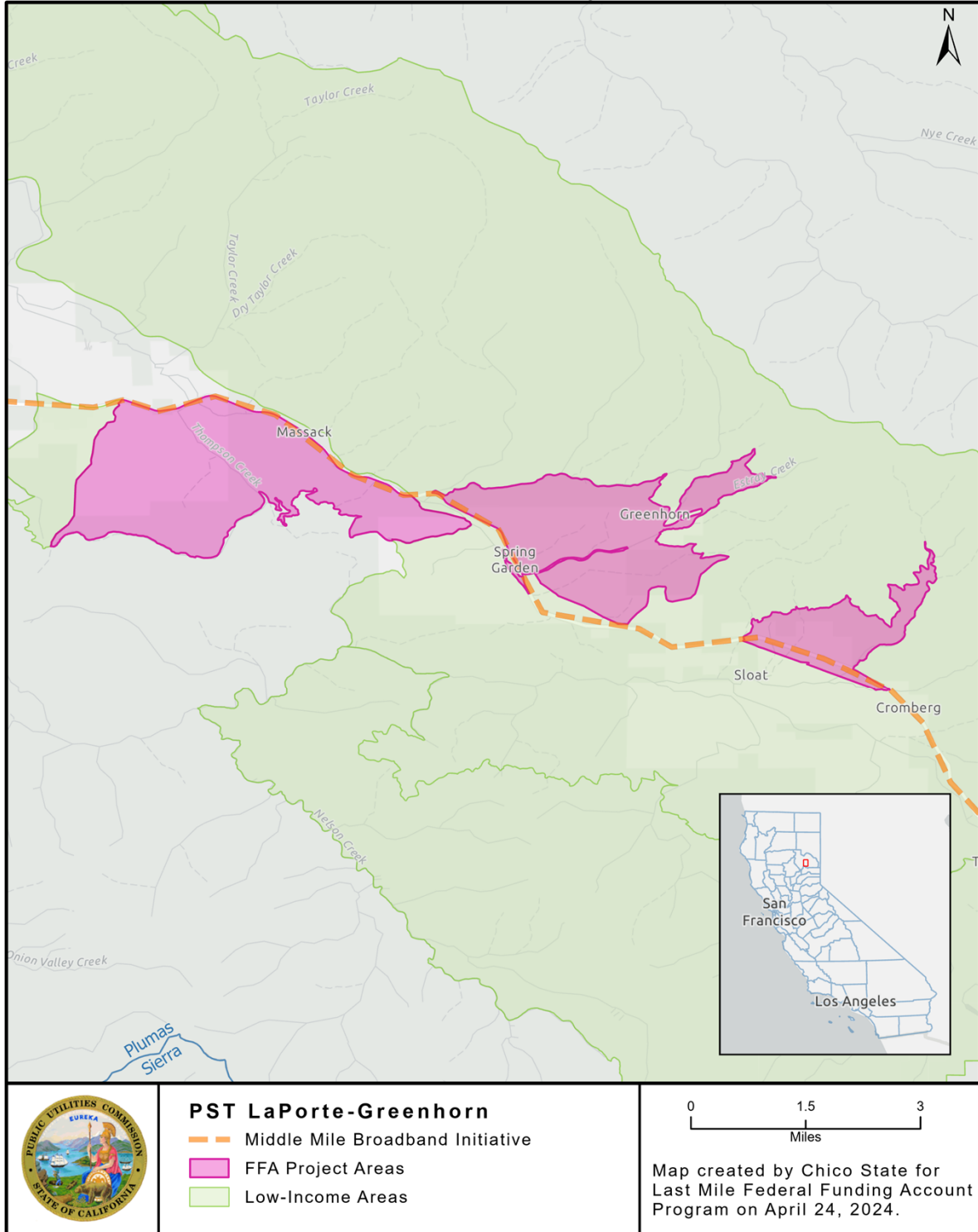
APPENDIX F
Map of PST Mohawk Vista-C Road
Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications- PST Mohawk Vista-C Road
Plumas County



APPENDIX G
PST LaPorte-Greenhorn
Key Information

Project Name	PST LaPorte-Greenhorn
Applicant Name	Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications
Community Names	North LaPorte Road, Greenhorn and Cromberg
County	Plumas County
County Allocation	\$42,282,567
Project Size (in square miles)	26
Maximum Download/Upload speed	Up to 1000 Mbps / 1000 Mbps
Percent Disadvantaged Communities	0 percent
Percent Low-Income Areas	78 percent
Median Household Income (weighted)	\$48,750
Area Population	413
Households	198
Estimated unserved population in the project area	410
Estimated unserved locations in the project area	280
Does the project connect to public open access middle mile?	Yes
Deployment Schedule	24 months
Total Project Cost	\$5,501,167
Amount of FFA grant funds requested	\$5,501,167
Applicant funded	\$0
Grant per unserved location passed	\$19,647

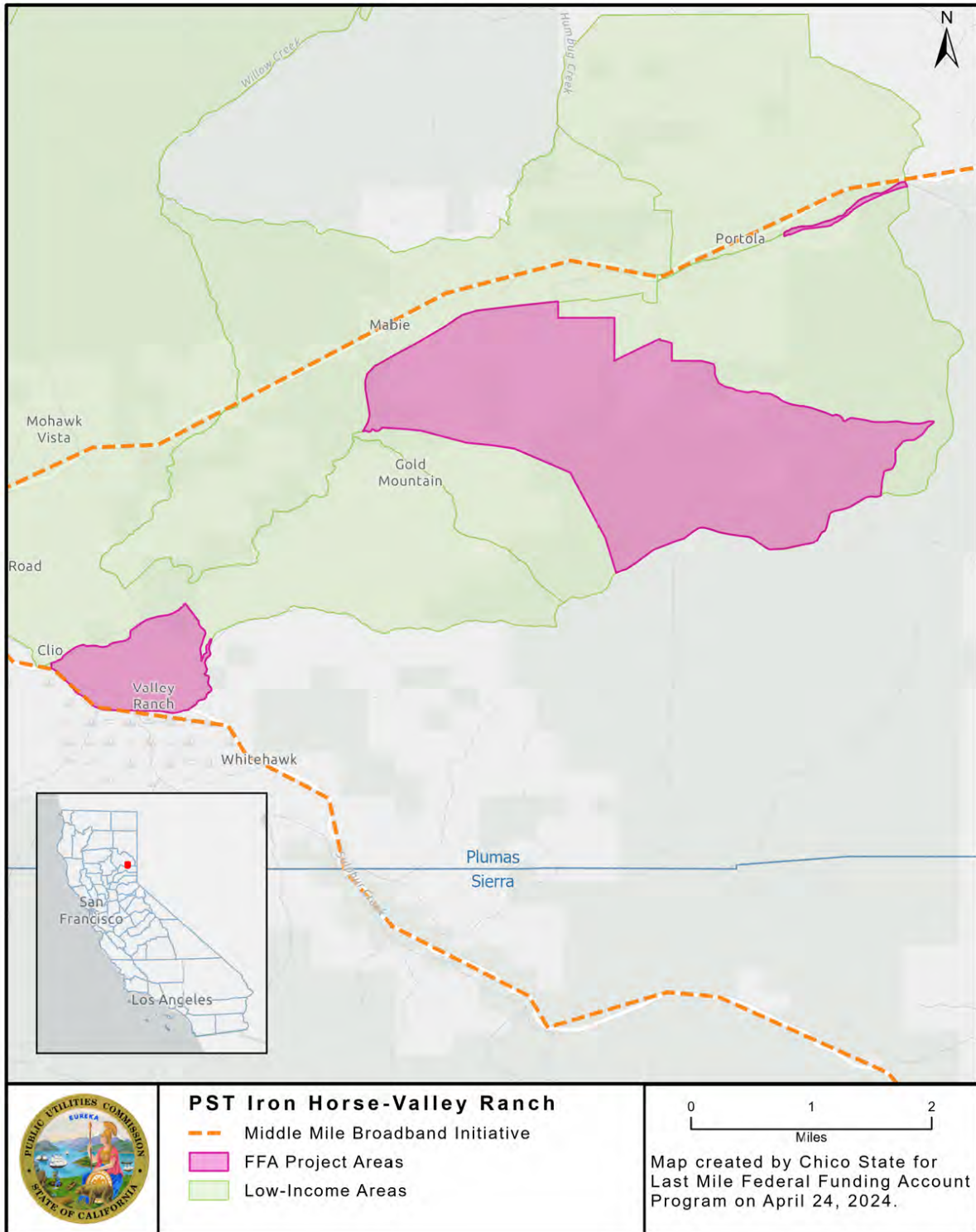
APPENDIX G
Map of PST LaPorte-Greenhorn
Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications- PST LaPorte-Greenhorn
Plumas County



APPENDIX H
PST Iron Horse-Valley Ranch
Key Information

Project Name	PST Iron Horse-Valley Ranch
Applicant Name	Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications
Community Names	Iron Horse and Valley Ranch
County	Plumas County
County Allocation	\$42,282,567
Project Size (in square miles)	9
Maximum Download/Upload speed	Up to 1000 Mbps / 1000 Mbps
Percent Disadvantaged Communities	0 percent
Percent Low-Income Areas	100 percent
Median Household Income (weighted)	\$61,313
Area Population	420
Households	176
Estimated unserved population in the project area	369
Estimated unserved locations in the project area	247
Does the project connect to public open access middle mile?	Yes
Deployment Schedule	24 months
Total Project Cost	\$3,624,868
Amount of FFA grant funds requested	\$3,624,868
Applicant funded	\$0
Grant per unserved location passed	\$14,676

APPENDIX H
Map of PST Iron Horse-Valley Ranch
Plumas-Sierra Telecommunications- PST Iron Horse-Valley Ranch-
Plumas County



APPENDIX I
California Public Utilities Commission
Federal Funding Account, Last-Mile Program
Guidance to Staff Regarding
CONSENT FORM
Acknowledgement and Acceptance of Terms

Awardee Name: _____

Key Project Contact: _____

The Awardee identified above acknowledges receipt of the California Public Utilities Commission Resolution or Award Letter and agrees to comply with all grant terms, conditions, and requirements set forth in the Resolution or Award Letter including those in the Federal Funding Account, Last Mile Program Rules. Awards are contingent on available state budget appropriations funding and may be subject to Budget Letter 24-07.¹

Undersigned representative of _____ [Name of Awardee] is duly authorized to execute this Consent Form on behalf of the Awardee and to bind the Awardee to the terms, conditions, and requirements set forth in California Public Utilities Commission Resolution or Award Letter and those in the Federal Funding Account, Last Mile Program Rules.

Dated this ____ day of _____, 20____.

Signature of Awardee Representative: _____

Title _____

Printed Name _____

Name of Business, Organization, Local Agency or Tribe:

Business Address (include street address, suite/apt. number, city, state, and ZIP Code):

Telephone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

¹ Department of Finance Budget Letter 24-07, "Onetime Appropriation(s) Expenditure Freeze Pursuant to Section 21 of the Budget Act of 2023 (As Amended by Section 74 of AB 106 (Chapter 9, Statutes of 2024)), available at: <https://dof.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/352/2024/04/BL-24-07.pdf>