



County of Santa Cruz

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PRESS RELEASE: COUNTY EARNS NATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD FOR BROADBAND INITIATIVE

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The County of Santa Cruz has been recognized with an Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties. The awards honor innovative, effective county government programs that enhance services for residents. NACo recognized Santa Cruz County for its program titled "Policy-Driven Broadband Initiative" in the category of Community & Economic Development.

The Santa Cruz County Fiber Initiative will offer new high-speed internet services to both private citizens and local businesses – services that would not otherwise be available. While the current definition of high speed internet (6Mbps) has been met throughout the county, in order to be competitive local businesses need much more bandwidth. The impacts on local economic development and the establishment of a new technical class of professional labor will guarantee Santa Cruz County's position amongst the jurisdictions that comprise Silicon Valley.

The County of Santa Cruz has developed a series of policies and programs to encourage private investment and proliferation of broadband infrastructure. These policies include a "dig once" policy where fiber conduit will be installed whenever public rights-of-way are broached, a revision of permitting fees to directly reflect actual county cost, streamlining the permitting process for fiber infrastructure projects, establishing common technical specifications for broadband infrastructure projects, a master lease agreement for companies interested in locating their infrastructure on County assets, and the development of a Broadband Master Plan to guide future policy and infrastructure development.

Zach Friend, Santa Cruz County Supervisor, said, "Many regions throughout the country face a situation similar to ours: deemed too rural for real capital investment by the Internet Service Providers but urban enough that this lack of investment really puts us at an economic and community disadvantage. To have these policies recognized at a national level shows their applicability and value throughout the country."

NACo President Riki Hokama, council member, Maui County, Hawaii, said, "The National Association of Counties applauds county governments that are embracing innovative and more effective ways to serve their constituents. The Achievement Awards recognize counties' outstanding efforts to strengthen services and deliver results for residents across the country."

Nationally, awards are given in 21 different categories that reflect the vast, comprehensive services counties provide. The categories include children and youth, criminal justice, county administration, environmental protection, information technology, health, civic engagement and many more.

The awards will be presented at NACo's 2015 Annual Conference and Exposition July 20-13 in Mecklenburg County, N.C.

Started in 1970, NACo's annual Achievement Award Program is designed to recognize innovative county government programs.

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