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For More Information Contact:

Carolyn Jhaji
Communications Director
916-447-4806
cjhaji@rcrcnet.org

California Rural Counties Awarded \$2.7 Million to Support Broadband Deployment

SACRAMENTO, CA – Today, the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) announced the awarding of \$2.7 million in American Rescue Plan grant funding through the Economic Adjustment Assistance program for the development of broadband strategic plans in 27 rural California counties. Golden State Finance Authority (GSFA) will serve as the grant administrator for these planning funds, which will assist rural counties in establishing foundational readiness for broadband infrastructure deployment within their communities.

High-speed internet availability in rural California is often a critical missing component of infrastructure. Its absence precludes residents and businesses in unserved and underserved communities from participating in the 21st Century economy.

To address these issues, within the past year the federal government and State of California both set aside billions in targeted funding. In the American Rescue Plan the federal government allocated \$3 billion for EDA to distribute for a variety of one-time public investments, including broadband. Similarly, California Governor Gavin Newsom signed Senate Bill 156 in July 2021, establishing a landmark \$6 billion investment in broadband infrastructure, representing a significant step in bridging the digital divide.

The \$2.7 million in funding recently awarded to GSFA on behalf of rural California counties is specifically provided through EDA's Economic Adjustment Assistance grant program. With this funding, GSFA will assist 27 of its member counties in establishing countywide broadband strategic plans. These plans will increase the ability of those rural counties to invite and direct broadband investment into their communities in a strategic manner that ultimately delivers broadband for all residents and businesses. It will also open the door for counties to take advantage of other upcoming federal and state funding opportunities that often require broadband strategic plans to be in place.

“On behalf of GSFA, I would like to thank the US Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration for this significant investment,” said **GSFA Board Chair and Tehama County Supervisor Bob Williams**. “With this grant award all rural counties in California will now have established, proactive

plans for broadband implementation for their underserved residents, representing an important milestone in the drive to achieve digital equity throughout the state.”

By establishing broadband foundational readiness for these counties, the grant will also allow for the advancement of work under GSFA’s affiliate Golden State Connect Authority (GSCA) to expand broadband access for rural California.

GSCA is a joint powers authority comprised of 39 rural California counties designed for the purpose of increasing access to reliable, affordable high-speed internet for the residents and businesses of those counties. GSCA assists rural counties in identifying pathways for development of internet infrastructure within their communities, including the construction of municipal-owned and/or operated internet systems, among other options. Pending the establishment of the organization in December 2021, GSCA’s affiliate entity GSFA submitted the EDA grant application.

“The establishment of high-speed internet access is vital to the overall health, safety, education, and economic well-being of our rural communities,” **said GSCA Board Chair and Calaveras County Supervisor Jack Garamendi.** “This critical investment represents the first crucial step in broadband implementation for 27 of our member counties, helping them to establish foundational readiness for broadband deployment, and advance the overall reduction of the digital divide in rural California.”

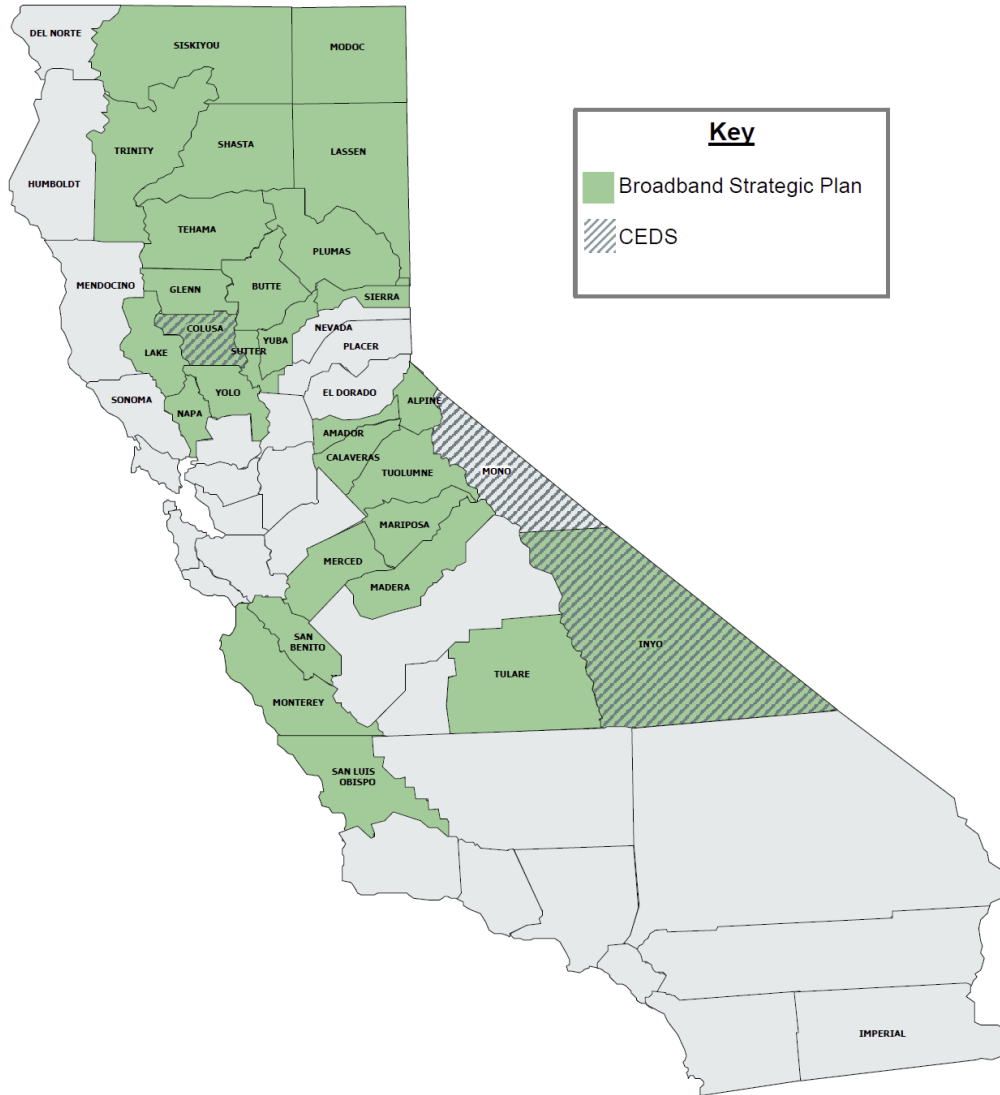
In addition to funding for the development of countywide broadband strategic plans, the award also includes funding for the development of Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS) for two areas within the GSFA county membership – Colusa County and Mono/Inyo counties. CEDS are local stakeholder driven strategies that guide regional economic development, encourage partnerships and collaboration, and improve economic outcomes and overall quality of life in a region. Having a current CEDS in place is a pre-requisite for access to many federal infrastructure and technical assistance programs

For additional information, resources, and updates about GSFA visit www.gsfahome.org and for GSCA visit www.goldenstateconnect.org.

ABOUT GOLDEN STATE FINANCE AUTHORITY

Golden State Finance Authority (GSFA) is a California joint powers authority and a duly constituted public entity and agency. GSFA was established in 1993 by the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), a public service organization that champions policies on behalf of California’s rural counties. GSFA has distinguished itself as a leader in housing finance in California for more than 29 years, helping more than 85,000 individuals and families purchase a home. GSFA has provided over \$657 million in down payment assistance and helped finance over 35,500 energy efficiency improvement projects.

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Map identifying the 27 Golden State Finance Authority member counties that will develop countywide broadband strategic plans and/or Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDs) with the \$2.7 million grant funding award.