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REPORT TO ELECTORAL AREAS COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2020

SUBJECT **Update on Connectivity Planning for the Southern Gulf Islands**

ISSUE SUMMARY

To receive the *Connecting SGI: Connectivity Planning for the Southern Gulf Islands* report, which documents the results of the connectivity planning process undertaken in the SGI region over the past six months, involving community engagement on Pender, Mayne, Galiano, and Saturna Islands.

BACKGROUND

Throughout the Fall and Winter of 2019, the Southern Gulf Islands staff engaged island residents, community groups, businesses, non-profits, and government agencies to discuss the limitations of the current lack of connectivity and the potential for better, faster, more reliable internet to support the social, economic, and sustainability goals of the Southern Gulf Islands. Conversations focused on how better connectivity can help the Southern Gulf Islands meet its community needs and objectives, as well as the impacts and opportunities associated with increased connectivity. The results emphasize how improved connectivity is a fundamental need for Southern Gulf Islands communities to attract and retain young families, support low carbon economic development, and to improve access to social, educational, government, and health services. The next phase involves establishing partnerships with Internet Service Providers to advance design and phasing for implementation of the plan throughout the Southern Gulf Islands Electoral Area.

At the January 08, 2020 Electoral Areas Committee and CRD Board meetings, the following resolution was passed:

That staff be directed to seek partnerships with one or more Internet Service Providers and pursue funding for the design and implementation of the Southern Gulf Islands Connectivity Plan.

Staff has started engaging with Internet Service Providers to canvas interest in advancing partnerships.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

The Electoral Areas Committee recommends to the Regional Board:

That the *Connecting SGI: Connectivity Planning for the Southern Gulf Islands* report be received for information.

Alternative 2

The Electoral Areas Committee request staff report back to the committee with further information on the report *Connecting SGI: Connectivity Planning for the Southern Gulf Islands*, as directed.

IMPLICATIONS

This project supports CRD Board priorities and the corporate plan priorities for Economic Development of Rural Areas (4b-2): “to advance economic development and plans through commissions;” and (4a-1): “support CRD Board on building an advocacy strategy to ensure all occupied properties have the opportunity to access high-speed internet services.”

The *Connecting SGI* process has integrated the voices of a range of different sectors on each island and throughout the Electoral Area. This has contributed to a sense of regional commonality and demonstrated the breadth of community support for better, faster, more reliable internet in the islands. Provincial and Federal granting agencies that support infrastructure investment, including last mile connectivity, indicate community connectivity plans support the success of applications for investment funding. Connectivity planning is considered essential because it requires the community to do the groundwork in identifying its actual needs for improved service. A resolution of the CRD Board will be required prior to submission of funding applications.

CONCLUSION

Results of the *Connecting SGI* Report indicates that connectivity is a fundamental necessity to enable the Southern Gulf Islands communities to diversify the demographic profile of the islands and achieve economic, social, and environmental sustainability into the future. The next phase involves establishing partnerships with Internet Service Providers to advance design and phasing for implementation of the plan throughout the Southern Gulf Islands Electoral Area.

RECOMMENDATION

The Electoral Areas Committee recommends to the Regional Board:

That the *Connecting SGI: Connectivity Planning for the Southern Gulf Islands* report be received for information.

Submitted by:	Justine Starke, MCIP, RPP, Manager, SGI Service Delivery, Corporate Services
Concurrence:	Kristen Morley, J.D., General Manager, Corporate Services & Corporate Officer
Concurrence:	Nelson Chan, MBA, CPA, CMA, Chief Financial Officer
Concurrence:	Robert Lapham, MCIP, RPP, Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT(S)

Appendix A: *Connecting SGI: Connectivity Planning for the Southern Gulf Islands*