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PRESS RELEASE

County Judge KP George Launches “Public Challenge” to Close the Digital Disadvantaged in Fort Bend County

(FORT BEND, TX) – Today, Fort Bend County Judge KP George held a press conference to announce the launch of the Public Challenge initiative to encourage Fort Bend County residents to participate in the Federal Communications Commission’s (FCC) National Broadband Map. Data collected from the FCC’s National Broadband Map Public Challenge will be used to determine eligibility for funding for future broadband expansion.

Currently, the unserved and underserved areas in Fort Bend County include Fulshear, Simonton, Arcola, Fresno, Thompsons, Needville, and Sienna. Roughly, 61,000 households have been identified as not having adequate internet services.

“Fort Bend County is ranked as the second richest county in the state of Texas, the most educated, most graduate degrees...we are one of the fastest growing counties in the United States, however with all those good things, broadband is still a challenge,” stated County Judge George. “I urge our residents to complete the Public Challenge. This is about ensuring that all of Fort Bend County, no matter what zip code, can thrive.”

A key component to the potential future investment in broadband connectivity in the County is to apply for funding through the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program, established by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), which allocated \$42.45 billion towards expanding high-speed internet access across the United States.

The program aims to close the digital gap for unserved and underserved areas. Funding from the program will be distributed based on a formula that considers the number of unserved and high-cost locations in the state, based on the maps published by the FCC in 2022.

Joined by Stafford Municipal School District Superintendent Dr. Robert Bostic, Judge George emphasized the need to provide students with reliable internet access to support remote learning, allow educators to prepare lessons using internet and digital technology, and broaden the scope of content knowledge for students.

Fort Bend County’s Director of Information Technology Robyn Doughtie echoed Judge George’s message for the public to participate in the Public Challenge so the County can be evaluated and address the infrastructure needs.

Residents can participate in the Public Challenge by simply going to the County’s website homepage at www.FBCTX.gov and clicking on the image that will take them to the Let’s Connect Texas Broadband Map to evaluate their accessibility.

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