



Commissioner Rodney Ellis

Harris County Precinct One

PUBLIC SERVICE | FAIR OPPORTUNITY | EQUAL JUSTICE

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NEWS RELEASE

Commissioners Court Moves to Expand Broadband Access, Ensure Equity in Internet Access

Commissioners Court Approves Creation of Harris County Broadband Office

Today, access to reliable internet is a necessity for households, not a luxury. Yet in Harris County, up to 123,000 residents have no access to wired internet. This puts residents at a disadvantage when it comes to accessing information, employment, financial, and educational resources. This is especially critical for school-aged children, whose access to online classes and resources has become even more important during the ongoing pandemic.

“There is no question that in 2020, not having access to the internet puts you at a serious disadvantage,” **said Commissioner Rodney Ellis**. “The County has made a concerted effort during this pandemic to get digital devices and Wi-Fi hotspots to low-income students, and this initiative will continue the work to close the digital divide. Making the investment in a permanent office and long-term strategy to expand broadband will ensure that in the future all residents have access to reliable internet. The Harris County Broadband Office will not only address this deep inequity in access to internet, but it will make our County more prosperous and resilient for the future.”

The County, state, and school districts have undertaken a historic investment in the past few months in hotspots and devices aimed at closing the digital divide for school-aged children, with \$34M coming directly from the County. This new initiative will build on these efforts to advance equity of economic and educational opportunities for everyone in the county, particularly communities of color that have been left behind due to the persisting digital divide.

The Harris County Broadband Strategy and Office, approved by Commissioners Court today, will coordinate Harris County’s efforts to expand broadband access throughout the county. This will include planning investments in broadband infrastructure, securing funding from state, federal, and private partners, and implementing targeted projects with quantifiable and durable benefits to the county and its residents. Similar efforts are currently underway in states like Colorado and North Carolina, as well as in cities like New York City and San Jose, California.

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