



NEWS RELEASE

Board of Supervisors

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CONTACT:

David Wert
Public Information Officer
(909) 387-4842
dwert@sbcountry.gov

Board approves Starlink test to explore satellite internet



Starlink and San Bernardino County were seemingly made for each other.

The low-flying satellite constellation that will one day cover the globe, a product of engineer and entrepreneur Elon Musk's SpaceX, was designed to provide fast, reliable internet connectivity to underserved areas of the planet. Places far away from the closest landline, Wi-Fi, and cellular services many people in urban and suburban areas take for granted. Places like some of the most remote areas of San Bernardino County.

That's why the Board of Supervisors today approved an agreement with Starlink to test a beta version of Starlink. If the test goes well, the county could begin using Starlink to provide connectivity to remote Sheriff's deputies and other county personnel serving the public in remote areas.

"Starlink holds the promise of making high-speed internet available to students, home businesses, seniors, and other county residents who have never imagined service could be possible in their communities," said Board of Supervisors Chairman Curt Hagman, a constant and consistent champion for identifying and employing cutting-edge technology to improve government services.

Much larger than all of Switzerland as well as nine U.S. states, at 20,105 square miles San Bernardino County is by far the largest county in the country (Alaska has four that are larger, but they're called "boroughs"). As a result, many small desert communities are an hour's drive away or further from their nearest neighbor, and considerably out of range for most technologies.

Connecting these communities to information from the world around them has long been a priority for the county. For instance, there are places in San Bernardino County that can't be reached by television signals beamed from Los Angeles. For decades, the county has operated mountain-top relay stations to grab those faraway TV signals and throw them across sparsely populated desert valleys.

Starlink is a constellation of small satellites in low Earth orbit that work in combination with ground receivers. Because Starlink satellites are closer to Earth than traditional satellites, signals get to their destinations more quickly than those from other higher-flying satellite internet services. Starlink is offering beta testing of this satellite-based internet service while it continues a planned expansion to achieve near-global coverage in 2021.

If the county's beta test is successful, the county would be uniquely positioned to take advantage of this service for the many remote and infrastructure-challenged areas throughout the county.

"The county has a duty to those we serve to think outside of the box and not do things just because that's the way we've always done them," Hagman said. "By applying new technologies we can maximize the quality and efficiency of our services and improve the lives of our residents."