

NEWS

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For Immediate Release

County Launches First-of-its-Kind “Smart Region” Innovation Center *SMC Labs tests “smart” solutions to address complex regional problems*

Redwood City — In an effort to foster borderless technology innovation, the County of San Mateo opened SMC Labs, a “smart solutions” innovation center, at its main campus in Redwood City as a way to bring cities, agencies, residents, universities and businesses together with solutions providers, domain experts and resources to co-create innovative solutions for complex regional problems.

The County announced the creation of SMC Labs today at IoT World 2018, the industry’s leading IoT conference attended by over 12,000 Internet of Things (IoT) professionals in Santa Clara, CA.

“Housing, traffic, mobility, and environmental issues don’t stop at city borders. Regional problems require a borderless approach, and the County of San Mateo is uniquely positioned to address these issues. We laid the groundwork last year when we started deploying a countywide fiber and public Wi-Fi network as the first step towards a Digital San Mateo County. SMC Labs is the next step of this journey,” said County of San Mateo Chief Information Officer Jon Walton.

Currently, SMC Labs has established two innovation zones for testing solutions to local issues, one on the San Mateo County Center campus in Redwood City and another at East Palo Alto City Hall. Innovative solutions will be piloted in these managed environments first before they are deployed to other locations in the county. Additional innovation zone sites are in the works.

Conceived and planned with the County’s innovation partner Strategy of Things, SMC Labs is one part of a broader, first-of-its-kind smart region initiative by the County of San Mateo to use “smart technologies,” such as the Internet of Things (IoT), machine learning, “big data,” and blockchain, to address regional issues. While many cities have “Smart City” initiatives, the efforts of the County are broader, targeting complex issues that span traditional boundaries.

“Cities, businesses, and residents within San Mateo County will have access to solutions experts, best practices, and proven solutions which are tested in the innovation zone. This eliminates having to re-invent the wheel, reduces risk, and accelerates time to solution,” said Renil Paramel, senior partner at Strategy of Things.

In addition, SMC Labs is launching with an inaugural set of innovation partners, including T-Mobile (NB-IoT wireless connectivity), Helium (decentralized machine network), Fybr (end-to-end smart city platform), RoamBee (asset tracking) and Ntropy (resident engagement). SMC Labs will continue to collaborate with more partners in the upcoming months.

“The smart city initiatives being rolled out across San Mateo County will help propel it to the forefront of initiatives across the nation,” said Dave Mayo, SVP 5G & IoT Business Chief, T-Mobile. “From smart LED lighting control and waste management to asset tracking, T-Mobile is thrilled to start engaging with the County of San Mateo to bring multiple pilot projects to life throughout the county on the nation’s fastest LTE network, and soon on our NB-IoT network.”

SMC Labs, directed by County Chief Smart Communities Officer Ulysses Vinson and a program of the Information Systems Department (ISD), is currently piloting a number of solutions, including:

- parking availability for electric vehicles and disabled parking spots;
- irrigation water conservation with smart moisture sensors;
- localized air quality and environmental monitoring;
- real time tracking and monitoring of mobile assets;
- pedestrian and outdoor space utilization;
- optimized and predictive waste collection; and
- smart mobility, ride sharing services, last mile commuting.

“Despite being located in the heart of Silicon Valley, there are two very different populations in San Mateo County,” said Vinson. “One is technology-savvy and lives in the larger, resource rich cities. The other includes smaller suburban and underserved rural communities with limited digital infrastructure. My goal is to bring innovative solutions from SMC Labs to serve all San Mateo County residents, leaving no one behind.”

One of SMC Labs’ most innovative approaches is its collaboration with Helium, an IoT connectivity startup based in San Francisco, to test and deploy a community-based decentralized network.

“We’re thrilled to partner with innovative, forward-looking organizations like the County of San Mateo and SMC Labs,” said Helium Chief Executive Officer Amir Haleem. “By combining blockchain with wireless connectivity technologies, our decentralized machine network incentivizes people to both power and use the network. This win-win approach accelerates IoT wireless connectivity throughout the county, rewards community members for setting up and maintaining their Helium gateways, and minimizes the investment necessary for San Mateo County to power a network of IoT devices.”

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COUNTY OF SAN MATEO

