

Your Community Impact Statement has been successfully submitted to City Council and Committees.

If you have questions and/or concerns, please contact the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment at NCsupport@lacity.org.

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Contact Information

Neighborhood Council: Arroyo Seco Neighborhood Council

Name: Drew Paonessa

Phone Number:

Email: drewpaonessaasnc@gmail.com

The Board approved this CIS by a vote of: Yea(11) Nay(0) Abstain(0) Ineligible(0) Recusal(0)

Date of NC Board Action: 07/27/2020

Type of NC Board Action: For if Amended

Impact Information

Date: 07/29/2020

Update to a Previous Input: No

Directed To: City Council and Committees

Council File Number: 20-0762

Agenda Date:

Item Number:

Summary: 20-0762 low cost internet for low income and marginalized communities. The Arroyo Seco Neighborhood Council (ASNC) supports, with amendment, this motion (20-0762) instructing the Information Technology Agency to report back within 20 days. At the time of submitting this CIS the ITA report has not been filed.



- COMMUNITY IMPACT STATEMENT -

Council File: 20-0762

Related Council File: 19-0744

Title: Municipal Wireless Network Initiative / Los Angeles Residents

Position: Support, if amended

Summary:

The Arroyo Seco Neighborhood Council (ASNC) supports, with amendment, this motion (20-0762) instructing the Information Technology Agency to report back within 20 days. At the time of submitting this CIS the ITA report has not been filed.

We commend Councilmembers Cedillo and Koretz for their attention to closing the digital divide. A recent report from USC Annenberg titled “COVID-19 and the Distance Learning Gap” found that 29% of K-12 households in our neighborhood council district do not have a desktop or laptop computer or broadband connection at home. The same report found that “regardless of income, students of color are less likely to have the technology resources for distance learning. For example, the gap between Hispanic and non-Hispanic students at the same income level is as high as 20 percentage points. The reason is that minority students, regardless of income, tend to live in communities with underfunded schools and less advanced broadband infrastructure.” Even for households within ASNC who *can* afford to buy premium tier internet service, the infrastructure in our area is inadequate to meet current demand. The stay at home orders have diverted heavy internet traffic loads to our primarily residential neighborhoods, such that households have to coordinate usage schedules to ensure bandwidth availability. Our canyons present a challenge for telecommunications companies to provide reliable cell phone coverage, resulting in an increased dependency on internet-based phone calls. We would benefit from the city stepping in to ensure a base level of reliable internet service.

We suggest amending the motion to specifically include consideration of persons with disabilities. Although there may be some intersection with persons of lower socioeconomic status, persons with temporary and long-term disabilities have a distinct set of barriers to access that city policies need to address from the outset.

We acknowledge that due to Los Angeles' immense geographic sprawl, implementing a city-wide system will be a significant undertaking requiring a long term, phased rollout plan. We encourage the council to explore executing a municipal WiFi system in partnership with Metro, to use the existing network of bus and rail stops as potential sites for WiFi mesh hotspots. We hope that, unlike other municipalities that have prioritized high-tourism and business districts, Los Angeles' municipal WiFi roll out plan will initially focus on closing the digital divide by targeting neighborhoods with the lowest levels of internet access in the first phase of the implementation.

We are concerned that the scope of this project will require a level of inter-agency coordination and an investment of resources that will not meet the immediate and urgent needs brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Council motion 19-0744, filed on June 28, 2019, called for the Information Technology Agency, in partnership with LA Public Library, Department on Disability, Economic and Workforce Development, and LA Department of Water and Power, to report on how the city could raise awareness of and disseminate information on the availability of low-cost internet plans to disadvantaged and low-income communities. It took until June 15, 2020 for that report to be filed and the getconnectedlosangeles.lacity.org website to launch. In the meantime, the Partnership for Los Angeles Schools conducted an outreach study to confirm the availability and access of the low-cost plans being marketed by Los Angeles area internet service providers (ISPs), and found that many of them were not fulfilling the services as marketed. These findings are outlined in their report "[Bridging LA's Digital Divide: Increasing Access to WiFi and Technology for Low-Income Communities and Communities of Color](#)", and in the related articles published by the Los Angeles Times "[Getting free internet is hard for poor students despite provider promises, survey finds](#)" [April 22, 2020] and LAist "[Despite Free Internet Offers, Some Low-Income Parents Struggle To Get Kids Online For School](#)" [April 22, 2020]. The city needs to hold the ISPs accountable for providing the services that they are purporting to offer. We also hope the city recognizes the irony and inadequacy of providing a website to disseminate information about how to get online.

In conclusion, we support the city exploring building a municipal WiFi Network, prioritizing closing the digital divide for communities of color and persons with disabilities.