

MOTION

As of June 10, 2020, the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has been attributed to 64,644 documented cases and 2,655 deaths in Los Angeles County. The pandemic situation and subsequent emergency orders, such as California's Stay-At-Home Order, have placed an unprecedented strain on the welfare and resources of residents and laid bare the socioeconomic disparities within our City.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the ability to connect to the internet wirelessly had become commonplace, and for many, a necessity to function in society. Due to the emergency orders forcing millions to stay at home, access to wireless network technology (WiFi) has become an essential need for residents to continue to work and maintain contact with school, as well as access news, banking, shopping, and other services during this time.

However, our most underserved communities continue to lack reliable access to WiFi. According to a report from the Partnership for Los Angeles Schools (PLAS Report), 16 percent of LAUSD students in Watts, South Los Angeles, and Boyle Heights have no access to internet or WiFi. Community WiFi access points, such as at parks, libraries, restaurants, and coffee shops, are now unavailable due to the closure of these public spaces. While internet providers have publicly offered free WiFi during the pandemic to those with limited income, the PLAS Report noted that many residents have serious difficulty accessing these offerings. Those unable to afford costly private WiFi plans are left with few options for accessing vital services.

In order to bridge this digital divide, dozens of U.S. cities have established municipal wireless networks that serve their entire communities. Major metropolitan cities, including New York City, Boston, Chicago, Houston, and Baltimore, and locally the City of Santa Monica, provide free public WiFi to residents. In order to provide for the essential needs of Los Angeles residents, the City should investigate the feasibility and development of a municipal wireless network.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the Council instruct the Information Technology Agency to report in 20 days with recommendations to develop a municipal wireless network initiative to serve the residents of Los Angeles.

PRESENTED BY:


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