



New York City Comptroller
Scott M. Stringer

NEWS

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COMPTROLLER STRINGER AND BOROUGH PRESIDENTS DIAZ, ADAMS, BREWER, KATZ AND ODDO CALL FOR FIVE BOROUGH BROADBAND BILL OF RIGHTS ON PUBLIC WI-FI AGREEMENT

New York, NY-On Wednesday, New York City Comptroller Scott M. Stringer and Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. along with Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams, Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer, Queens Borough President Melinda Katz and Staten Island Borough President James Oddo outlined a Five Borough Broadband Bill of Rights to improve Internet speeds across the City, create stronger oversight and accountability and ensure greater community involvement in the proposal to create a free public WiFi system across New York City. The Franchise and Concession Review Committee (FCRC), on which Comptroller Stringer and the five Borough Presidents sit, will hold a hearing on Monday to discuss the draft franchise agreement for CityBridge LLC to create the “LinkNYC” WiFi system.

The main components of the Five Borough Broadband Bill of Rights are:

1. **Ending Internet Inequality** – The Administration should ensure that the contract provides for equal WiFi speed throughout all five boroughs. Currently, the contract provides that public phones with advertising receive up to 1 gigabit of speed, while in other areas of the City, public phones without advertising would receive 100 megabits of speed. Nearly two-thirds of the faster access points are slated to be in Manhattan, compared to only 6 percent in the Bronx.
2. **A Stronger, More Accountable Contract** – Stronger oversight provisions are necessary to ensure that contract requirements are met and accountability measures are robust. Currently, the contract permits the commissioner of the Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications (DoITT) to waive various contract requirements, including siting, removal and replacement schedules and technology requirements.
3. **Greater Transparency on Revenue Forecasts and Redistribution** – The contract is premised on a business model that puts advertising dollars ahead of people. The public should know what assumptions CityBridge’s business model is based on, including how much revenue is being generated by the advertising and where those funds will be going.
4. **Community Consultation** – The contract should include language that ensures that the process of deploying WiFi across the City is executed with the interests and input of communities in every borough. Just as the Department of Transportation engaged community stakeholders, business improvement districts, community boards, and the public regarding siting of CitiBike

stations, so too DoITT should work with the vendor(s) to craft a detailed, robust plan for community engagement.

5. **Sustainability and Resiliency:** The contract should require design enhancements which would allow the system to make use of alternative energy sources, like solar power, while also reducing its reliance on the existing power grid. Moreover, following the widespread power outages that occurred during Superstorm Sandy, greater detail is needed on how the system would function in the event of a disaster that causes power outages.

“LinkNYC leaves too many questions unanswered and too many New Yorkers out of the Internet fast lane. Creating the world’s largest public WiFi system is forward-thinking and a necessary step to keep New York City first among global cities. We need guarantees in writing to ensure that everyone has equal access to high-speed Internet, that our communities are consulted when decisions are made about how to deploy this technology, and that this contract provides for state-of-the-art public WiFi, now and in the future,” **said New York City Comptroller Scott M. Stringer.**

“I want to make sure we bridge the digital divide, but we have to make sure we do it in the right way. Access to high-speed Internet cannot be based on the presumed advertising revenue available in any given neighborhood. DoITT must ensure that LinkNYC is implemented in a way that is equitable, sustainable, resilient, and meets the needs of the people of this City regardless of their neighborhood or income level,” **said Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr**

“I cannot imagine supporting a franchise for the expansion of free municipal Wi-Fi service that does not close the digital divide in our city. Every community must be connected to the information superhighway, in an equitable fashion, so we can make sure no New Yorker is left behind as we travel towards progress. I am working closely with my fellow borough presidents on reviewing the plan in front of the FCRC and discussing related ideas. I look forward to continuing to work closely with the de Blasio administration to discuss these issues, as well as the siting of these services,” **said Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams**

“I have been advocating for greater public access to the Internet for many years now and strongly support the goals of this proposal to provide free, public, city-wide WiFi. I do have concerns with the implementation of the program. Together with my colleagues in the other four Borough Presidents’ offices, I have asked the administration to create a formalized process for community input into the siting of the WiFi kiosks; to increase the number of units outside the major business districts; and to develop a plan to upgrade speeds in the kiosks without advertising, most of which are in northern Manhattan and the other boroughs. I look forward to addressing these issues with the administration so that we may move forward in getting free public WiFi into our communities,” **said Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer.**

“We're thrilled that free, citywide public WiFi is on the way, but without equitable access throughout the city, this is a plan that divides. Queens deserves access to the highest public WiFi speed and cannot approve a proposal that does not have a plan to ensure equity and a process for community input. The administration needs to formalize a siting agreement for Queens, including how, when and where they will increase the number of WiFi kiosks and how they plan to ensure equitable access,” **said Queens Borough President Melinda Katz.**

“In numerous conversations with my colleagues, they have raised many legitimate questions regarding siting, speeds, resiliency, and many other issues of concern. I believe it is important that we stand united to ensure these issues are adequately addressed and resolved,” **said Staten Island Borough President James Oddo.**

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