



City of Baltimore

City Council
City Hall, Room 408
100 North Holliday Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Legislation Text

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* **Warning:** This is an unofficial, introductory copy of the bill.
The official copy considered by the City Council is the first reader copy.

Introductory*

City of Baltimore Council Bill R (Resolution)

Introduced by: President Young

A Resolution Entitled

A Council Resolution concerning **Informational Hearing - Municipal Broadband Feasibility Study**

For the purpose of requesting that the Department of Finance, the Department of Transportation, and the Mayor's Office of Information Technology appear before the City Council to discuss how they can collaborate to produce a formal feasibility study on developing a municipal-owned broadband network in Baltimore capable of ensuring that all Baltimore families have adequate internet access options.

Recitals

Internet access is essential to function in today's society, the need to make use of some internet service or another in order to take advantage of all available opportunities seems to increase every day. Internet access allows people to more efficiently do nearly everything, including applying for a job, renewing a driver's license, doing homework, or just being part of and actively participating in one's community. In order to be effective, that access must occur at adequate speeds. Those with no, or limited, access to the internet are increasingly being left behind.

Faster bandwidths are also necessary for telemedicine, distance learning, public safety, and economic development. Increasingly, many work from home and also require higher bandwidths. Companies choose to locate in those communities with improved infrastructure and leave those with poor infrastructure.

Although Baltimore has always been a city that embraces innovation and understands the value of infrastructure, in regard to internet access we are in danger of falling behind. Within Baltimore, 20 to 40% of residents do not connect to the Internet at home through wired access. Even those who do connect often lack access to the next-generation speeds that will be needed to fully take advantage of the newest group of online tools - only about 10% of Baltimore homes have access to speeds approaching that 1 Gigabit/second standard.

Baltimore has long sought, and been denied, investment in fiber to the premises (FTTP) internet networks from the private sector. The current federal administration's repeal of Obama-era regulations ensuring that internet providers provide access to all content and applications regardless of the source may further reduce the incentive for private internet providers to build out their networks since they will now be able to financially benefit from internet congestion. In this environment, it is time for Baltimore to consider joining the roughly

150 or more municipalities nationwide who have deployed municipal-owned FTTP networks to ensure that their citizens have the ability to take advantage of all of the opportunities that the internet offers.

Before making a decision about launching a new City internet utility, it is important to get an accurate picture of the costs and benefits that a municipal-owned FTTP network would bring to Baltimore. The various funding options for publically or privately financing a FTTP network, as well as possibilities for public/private sponsorships, should also be formally explored. Baltimore cannot afford to be left on the wrong side of the digital divide. If the private sector refuses to address these issues on its own, the City needs to take a hard and long look at its options for ensuring adequate internet access options for all Baltimore families.

Now, therefore, be it resolved by the City Council of Baltimore, That the Council requests that the Department of Finance, the Department of Transportation, and the Mayor's Office of Information Technology appear before it to discuss how they can collaborate to produce a formal feasibility study on developing a municipal-owned broadband network in Baltimore capable of ensuring that all Baltimore families have adequate internet access options.

And be it further resolved, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the Director of Finance, the Director of Transportation, the Chief Information Officer, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.