



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council Members

FROM: Rondella Hawkins, Telecommunications & Regulatory Affairs Officer *RH*

DATE: July 6, 2016

SUBJECT: Update on Interdepartmental Task Force on Wireless Communications

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide an update on the Task Force progress towards the development of procedures for wireless attachments for small cell and distributed antenna systems in the City's right-of-way and on City infrastructure.

Background:

Multiple providers have contacted City officials and departments, including Austin Energy, seeking permission to install wireless telecommunications equipment (Distributed Antenna and Small Cell) and Wi-Fi systems in the public right of way that are attached to street and traffic light poles, electric distribution poles, and on City buildings with connecting fiber to the installations. Currently, there are no City policies or regulations for the use of the City's public right of way or infrastructure by wireless service providers. There are also no rules for managing the competing demands for antenna attachment space and other available assets.

The proposed wireless antenna system installations include overhead, above ground, and underground placement of radio transceivers, antennas, connecting fiber optic cables, amplifiers, power and back-up power supplies, control boxes, cabinets and the installation of poles where needed.

While we support improving wireless communications services to meet the needs of consumers, businesses, public safety, and digital inclusion priorities, such improvements must consider other important factors such as community beautification and esthetics, evolving technology, public right-of-way, and impact of the City's infrastructure to include:

- Changing technologies with the flexibility for innovation
- Expansion of the use of the public right of way while balancing competing public interests, such as:
 - Continue to improve the quality of City streets and sidewalks through the City's Great Streets initiative by reducing physical and visual clutter on City streets;
 - Obtain fair compensation for the use of the public right of way and attachments to City infrastructure;
 - Satisfy the City's obligations with regard to public safety and welfare, such as:
 - potential conflict with ADA requirements
 - reduced sight lines to public signage
 - Manage disruption from excavation and installation on City streets.

Earlier this year, the City Manager's Office created an Interdepartmental Wireless Communications Policy and Procedures Task Force to explore the best, most consistent approach for City Departments to respond to increasing requests to install small cell antenna systems in the public right of way and on City buildings and infrastructure.

The Task Force process began March 28th with fact finding meetings consisting of the following service providers: AT&T, Crown Castle, Extenet Systems, IBM/Corning, ITB Utility, Google, Sprint/Cisco, Verizon, and the Zayo Group. During these meetings, Task Force members gathered technical and practical information for a better understanding of provider needs, equipment installation options, and potential impacts and interactions with City rights of way and assets.

Next, Task Force members heard from various City Departments about pole attachment requirements and standards, building and property attachments, public safety requirements, design standards and Great Streets design requirements for Downtown, and specific procedures related to licensing/permitting/franchising.

The Task Force conducted research with other cities to see how they are dealing with these wireless issues. Since distributed antenna systems and small cell deployments are still both fairly new emerging technologies, many cities like Austin, are creating new policies and strategies to address these network deployments.

The Task Force is finalizing its recommendations which will be provided to the City Manager by the end of this month. Service providers will have an opportunity to provide input to City management at a meeting later this month.

Finally, staff plans to report out recommendations to the Public Utilities Committee at their next regular meeting on September 21, 2016. The City will engage the providers again in advance of the report to the Public Utility Committee. Should you have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

cc: Marc A. Ott, City Manager
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Mark Dombroski, Interim General Manager, Austin Energy
Stephen Elkins, Chief Information Officer
Greg Guernsey, Planning and Zoning Director
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