

**OFFICE OF TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION TESTIMONY BEFORE THE NEW
YORK CITY COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEE ON ZONING AND FRANCHISES**

Res 1109-2025 - Authorizing the New York City Department of Information Technology & Telecommunications to extend a franchise agreement, allowing for the installation, operation, and maintenance of public communications structures in the NYC Boroughs.

November 13, 2025

Good morning, Chair Riley and members of the Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises. My name is Brett Sikoff and I am the Executive Director of Franchise Administration and Broadband for the Office of Technology and Innovation (OTI). I am here today with Chantal Senatus, OTI's Deputy Commissioner for Legal Matters. We will discuss Resolution 1109-2025, an authorizing resolution, or AR, submitted by the Mayor pursuant to Section 363 of the Charter to extend the term of non-exclusive franchises for the installation, operation, and maintenance of public communications structures (PCS) citywide. In other words, this AR will allow OTI to negotiate an extension to the franchise agreement that permits the operation and deployment of LinkNYC, the city's free public Wi-Fi kiosk program.

As you know, LinkNYC is the world's fastest, free public Wi-Fi network, providing high-speed connectivity, free phone calling, device charging, and connections to vital city services across all five boroughs. Because it is made possible through a franchise agreement which allows CityBridge to deploy kiosks on the city's valuable rights-of-way, these free services do not cost any taxpayer money. In fact, the program has generated approximately \$130 million in crucial revenue for the city over the course of the franchise.

Since its launch in 2015, the network of about 2,250 LinkNYC kiosks have become an integral part of the city's streetscape, providing free Wi-Fi to over 19 million subscribers, facilitating over 30 million phone calls, promoting over 2,200 community-based nonprofits and local small businesses through LinkNYC's LinkLocal program, and boosting critical city messaging, among many other benefits. Link5G, the kiosk design CityBridge has been deploying since 2021, supports the future needs of 5G infrastructure across the city.

OTI anticipates continuing the growth of this program and maintaining it for years to come, which is why we support this authorizing resolution. An extension of the term of the franchise – which is what the AR before us today would authorize – will enable CityBridge to continue providing LinkNYC's services that New Yorkers rely on. If the Council passes this AR, we can begin earnest discussions with CityBridge to restructure the current franchise to better serve New Yorkers and

the city in light of real-world conditions, requirements, and evolving technologies. We intend on negotiating more favorable terms for the city with respect to higher Minimum Annual Guarantees of revenue, alternative designs for residence and historic districts, and a community-focused approach to new deployments.

The AR under consideration today would allow for the extension of the term of OTI's franchise with LinkNYC franchisee, CityBridge, for a maximum of five (5) additional years, bringing the total term of the Agreement up to twenty (20) years. Upon Council passage of the AR, the substance of this extension will be determined through a negotiation between OTI and CityBridge, and will be subject to the approval of the Franchise & Concession Review Committee and the separate and additional approval of the Mayor.

We respectfully request the Council's consideration and passage of this Authorizing Resolution. We are now happy to answer any questions the Council Members have.

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LinkNYC Franchise Renewal

Last Updated 11.11.25

Tech:NYC Testimony in Support of Res. 1109

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of Tech:NYC in strong support of extending the City of New York's franchise agreement with LinkNYC. For nearly a decade, New York City has been a national leader in recognizing that broadband is critical infrastructure, not a luxury. Through the City's partnership with LinkNYC, millions of New Yorkers and visitors have gained access to fast, free internet and digital services in their neighborhoods—while the program has generated more than \$130 million in revenue for the City, with at least \$70 million more projected by 2035. In addition, over 20 organizations representing the business community, labor, nonprofit, civic, and community organizations have signed onto a letter in support of renewing the LinkNYC franchise, underscoring broad, citywide backing for this critical infrastructure, which has been submitted to the Committee.

To better understand how New Yorkers engage with this infrastructure, Tech:NYC and LinkNYC partnered in 2025 on a [citywide survey](#) of over 1,500 residents. The findings are clear: connectivity is essential, usage is growing, and there is broad public support for continuing and expanding LinkNYC's work. Fifty-five percent of New Yorkers now use free public Wi-Fi at least once a month, a six-point increase since 2023. Demand for fast, free Wi-Fi near home is especially strong, underscoring how important it is to deploy this infrastructure in residential neighborhoods, not just central business districts.

At the same time, the survey highlights real affordability challenges. Thirty-five percent of New Yorkers do not have an unlimited data plan, and among that group, 51% run out of data at least one month per year. For these New Yorkers, free public Wi-Fi is not a convenience—it is a necessity that allows them to stay connected to work, school, health care, and government services when their paid data runs out. Extending the LinkNYC franchise is therefore directly tied to the Council's broader goals around affordability, equity, and opportunity.

The survey also confirms strong support for LinkNYC's next-generation Link5G smart poles. After seeing a photo and description of Link5G, 77% of New Yorkers say they support having a smart pole in their neighborhood, and 75% say they are likely to use the free Wi-Fi if one is installed nearby. A solid majority—62%—agree that Link5G smart poles will provide needed benefits for their neighborhood and community, with particularly high support in areas such as the North Bronx, Upper Manhattan, Midtown and Downtown Manhattan, and Central Brooklyn. In other words, New Yorkers not only understand the value of this infrastructure—they want more of it, especially in communities that have historically been under-served.



LinkNYC is already delivering that value today. It is the world's fastest free public Wi-Fi network, powering billions of sessions for more than 19 million users and enabling over 30 million free calls. Through its LinkLocal program, LinkNYC has provided more than \$16 million in free digital advertising to small businesses and nonprofits across the five boroughs. This has given neighborhood businesses and community organizations access to high-visibility digital tools they otherwise could not afford, supporting local commerce and civic life while advancing the City's goals for inclusive economic growth.

What makes the LinkNYC franchise particularly compelling is that it achieves all of this; expanded access, stronger local economies, and cutting-edge digital infrastructure. It is a rare public-private partnership that simultaneously promotes digital equity, modernizes our streetscape, and strengthens the City's fiscal position. The collaboration between Tech:NYC and LinkNYC to rigorously measure public opinion and usage further demonstrates a responsible, data-driven approach to policy and deployment. Taken together with the letter signed by over 20 organizations from the business, labor, nonprofit, civic, and community sectors, this record shows that renewing the LinkNYC franchise reflects not only public opinion but also broad institutional consensus.

For these reasons, and based on clear evidence of public need and support from the joint Tech:NYC-LinkNYC survey, as well as the letter of support signed by over 20 organizations representing the business community, labor, nonprofit, civic, and community organizations, we respectfully urge the City Council and the Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises to extend the LinkNYC franchise agreement. Doing so will reaffirm New York City's commitment to an affordable, accessible, and future-ready digital infrastructure that serves every neighborhood and every New Yorker.

Sincerely,

Alex Spyropoulos

Director of Government Relations
Tech:NYC



Letter of Support for LinkNYC Franchise Renewal

November 12, 2025

Speaker Adams, Chair Salamanca, Chair Riley, and Members of the Council,

For nearly a decade, New York City has stepped up to ensure that every New Yorker has access to free high-speed broadband access in their neighborhood through its partnership with LinkNYC. That is why we, the undersigned labor, business, technology, nonprofit, civic, and community organizations, write in full support of extending LinkNYC's franchise agreement with the City of New York.

As the current Mayoral campaign has shown, New Yorkers are clearly concerned with the city's high cost of living, which often puts even the most basic services out of reach for many of our neighbors. We know that through innovative public-private partnerships, we can lower the cost of living and make our city more accessible to everyone. We know this because LinkNYC has already successfully provided transformative, no-cost services to the public since 2016.

LinkNYC is the world's fastest free public Wi-Fi network, powering 3.5 billion sessions for over 19 million users and enabling more than 30 million free calls. Its LinkLocal program has provided our city's small businesses and nonprofits with over \$16 million in free digital ads. And at no cost to users or taxpayers, LinkNYC has generated more than \$130 million in revenue for the City, with at least \$70 million in additional revenue for the City by 2035.

A recent survey found 77% of city residents support Link5G in their neighborhoods. In a modern city like ours, broadband access is as essential as electricity or clean running water — all New Yorkers must have equitable access to the digital resources needed to thrive in the 21st century.

Extending LinkNYC's franchise means reaffirming the City's commitment to expand broadband access, foster inclusive economic growth, and ensure our digital infrastructure reflects our city's core values of equity, resilience, and innovation. We urge the City Council to support LinkNYC's franchise extension for a fairer, more connected, and economically just New York City.

Sincerely,

Julie Samuels, Tech:NYC

Randy Peers, Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce

Jessica Walker, Manhattan Chamber of Commerce

Linda Baran, Staten Island Chamber of Commerce

Lisa Sorin, Bronx Chamber of Commerce

Tom Grech, Queens Chamber of Commerce

Emma Phofman, ABNY

Kathryn S. Wylde, Partnership for NYC

Arva Rice, NY Urban League

Rafael Espinal, Freelancers Union

Christopher Erikson, Local 3 IBEW

Peter Rescigno, Electrical Contractors Association

Derrick H. Lewis, Bronx Community Foundation

Darren Bloch, Greenwich House

Jonathan Bowles, Center for an Urban Future

Bari Lasky, LIC Partnership

Johanne Brierre, BKLYN Commons

Dirk McCall, Sunnyside Shines

Nilbia Coyote, New Immigrant Community Empowerment (NICE)

Electra Watson, International Child Program

Jackie Aleman, The Chamber of Commerce of Washington Heights and Inwood

George Nunez, Bronx Tech Hub

Yesenia Mata, La Colmena

Michelle Gall, Digital Girl, Inc.