

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY JOINTLY  
WITH THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON ZONING AND  
FRANCHISES

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September 19, 2022  
Start: 1:15 p.m.  
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HELD AT: 250 BROADWAY-COMMITTEE RM, 14<sup>TH</sup>  
FLOOR

B E F O R E: Jennifer Gutierrez,  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Shaun Abreu  
Robert F. Holden  
Vicki Paladino  
Julie Won  
Kevin C. Riley  
Kamillah M. Hanks  
David Carr  
Erik Bottcher  
Francisco Moya  
Gale A. Brewer  
Julie Menin

## A P P E A R A N C E S

Brett Sikoff  
Executive Director of Franchise Administration  
for the Office of Technology and Innovation or  
OTI

Chantal Senatus  
Associate Commissioner and Acting General Counsel  
for OTI

Stuart Reid  
Co-Chairman of the Smart Community Initiative  
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Patrick Joseph  
Policy Analyst at Community Service Society of  
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Julian Kline  
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Annette Tomlin  
Vocal Leader for the Homeless Union

William Luckman  
Brooklyn resident in the 36<sup>th</sup> District

Rebecca Miller  
New York State Legislative Director for CWA  
District 1

## A P P E A R A N C E S (CONT.)

Andrew Kennedy

Volunteer Organizer with the New York City  
Democratic Socialist of America Tech Action  
Working Group

Leo Asen

State President of AARP New York

Kassi Keith

Leader of Vocal New York Homeless Union

1 COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY JOINTLY WITH THE  
2 SUBCOMMITTEE ON ZONING AND FRANCHISES  
3 SERGEANT AT ARMS: This is a microphone test.

4 Today's date is September 19, 2022. The joint  
5 Committee on Technology with Zoning and Franchises  
6 being recorded by John Berando (SP?), 14<sup>th</sup> Floor  
7 Committee Room.

8 Please confirm the webinar is running. Thank  
9 you. Good afternoon and welcome to today's hybrid  
10 New York Council hearing for the Committee on  
11 Technology jointly with the Subcommittee on Zoning  
12 and Franchises. To minimize disruptions please place  
13 all electronic devices to vibrate or silent mode. If  
14 you'd like to submit testimony, please send via email  
15 to [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov). Again, that is  
16 [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov). Thank you for your  
17 cooperation and Chairs Gutiérrez and Riley, we are  
18 ready to begin.

19 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Good afternoon. I'm  
20 Council Member Gutiérrez and I'm the Chair of the  
21 Committee on Technology. I'm happy to join my  
22 colleague Chair Kevin Riley in holding this joint  
23 hearing on Broadband and Equal Access to the Internet  
24 in New York City.

25 The COVID-19 pandemic and our ongoing recovery  
from its impacts have made it abundantly clear, what

3 was already deeply understood by so many. The  
4 internet is a crucial pillar of modern society and  
5 access to the internet is no longer a luxury, it is  
6 vital to be able to participate and succeed in our  
7 society.

8 Our most vulnerable communities including the low  
9 income and the elderly are the most likely to lack a  
10 high-speed home internet connection if they even have  
11 internet access at all. In the fall of 2020, up to  
12 13 percent of DOE students lacked access to adequate  
13 internet and despite DOE's distribution of devices so  
14 that students could access learning remotely, a  
15 significant number of students were still unable to  
16 log on and continue their education.

17 New York City cannot allow these inequities to  
18 continue, especially as we continue to see more city  
19 services accessible primarily through the internet.  
20 Past city efforts have taken aim at the problem of  
21 under connected New Yorkers, including the internet  
22 master plan released in January 2020. The internet  
23 master plan's guiding principles were anchored in  
24 five areas: Equity, performance, affordability,  
25 privacy, and choice.

3 This initiative sought to reorient the city's  
4 approach to broadband access, most importantly  
5 through an equity lens. This plan prioritize open  
6 access infrastructure so that multiple broadband  
7 service providers could more easily, and cost  
8 effectively deliver their services through city-owned  
9 channels, which could then result in cheaper and more  
10 widely available high-quality internet.

11 In addition, the internet master plan established  
12 a citywide goal around broadband deployment. A need  
13 that became increasingly urgent when the COVID-19  
14 pandemic revealed just how vital a dependable  
15 internet connection was and how many New Yorkers were  
16 in need. The internet master plan was celebrated by  
17 advocates, tech and government media outlets and New  
18 Yorkers all across our city.

19 In the summer of 2021, then Mayor Bill de Blasio  
20 announced \$157 million in city capital investment for  
21 their expressed purpose of advancing the  
22 implementation of the internet master plan. However,  
23 recent reporting including testimony from Tech  
24 Committee hearings just this year has indicated that  
25 the plan is currently under review and its related

3 initiative consequently have stopped – halted excuse  
4 me.

5 And last week, the U.S. Census released data that  
6 showed the hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers today  
7 still do not have access to the internet of any type.  
8 New Yorkers should not have to worry about having  
9 access to a dependable internet connection. As such,  
10 the Committee looks forward to hearing the updated  
11 status of the internet master plan and its related  
12 initiatives.

13 We understand that there are broadband  
14 initiatives that have recently been initiated by this  
15 administration including Big Apple Connect, Big Apple  
16 announcement this morning. Understanding the details  
17 of these new programs, their current phases of  
18 implementation, as well as additional plans this  
19 administration has for New York City's broadband  
20 connectivity, will be an important step toward  
21 collaboration and the process of equitably expanding  
22 broadband access throughout the five boroughs. It's  
23 important that this implementation happen quickly and  
24 equitably. With this in mind, we will consider the  
25 following bills in the Technology Committee today.

3 Intro. Number 112 sponsored by Council Member  
4 Holden, which would require DoITT to create an online  
5 portal containing information related to franchise  
6 agreements with the provision of cable television  
7 services.

8 Intro. Number 440 sponsored by Council Member  
9 Won, which would require the Office of Operations,  
10 the Office of Cyber Command and DoITT to establish a  
11 program for city agencies to provide Wi-Fi to the  
12 public.

13 Intro. Number 599 sponsored by Council Member  
14 Won, which would require DoITT to develop written  
15 materials containing information on affordable  
16 internet programs available to students and families  
17 in the city to be distributed to students at every  
18 school at the beginning of every cycle of every  
19 school year.

20 And Intro. Number 241 sponsored by myself, which  
21 would require DoITT in consultation with the DOE to  
22 purchase and distribute mobile hotspot devices to all  
23 New York City public school students. We hope that  
24 New York City continues to be a standard bear from  
25 progress, which includes technological advances. But  
forward advancement means nothing if we are leaving



3 New Yorkers behind. We must ensure that we expand  
4 the ability of all New Yorkers to access the internet  
5 and participate in modern society. The digital  
6 divide that exists today creates significant gaps in  
7 access to essential resources and opportunities and  
8 often functions as digital red lining.

9 Any municipal effort requires partnership and  
10 cooperation but especially with New York City's  
11 ability to bring more New Yorkers online, we are  
12 intent on working together with this administration,  
13 community leaders, advocates and industry to achieve  
14 this goal. We look forward to hearing the specifics  
15 of this administration's broadband efforts, as well  
16 as testimony from experts and advocates to learn more  
17 about what can be done to expand broadband access in  
18 New York City.

19 I would like to recognize the following members  
20 of the Tech Committee who are present with us today.  
21 Council Member Julie Won, Council Member Bob Holden,  
22 and I would also like to recognize Council Member  
23 Gale Brewer, Council Member Julie Menin, and of  
24 course our Chair Riley.

25 I'll now turn it over to Council Member Riley for  
his opening statement.

3 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you Chair. Good  
4 afternoon everyone. I am Council Member Kevin Riley,  
5 Chair of the Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises.  
6 I am pleased to be joined by Council Member Jennifer  
7 Gutièrrez, Chair of the Committee on Technology to  
8 hear a very important topic.

9 The COVID-19 pandemic has shined a spotlight in  
10 inequality in practically every sector of society.  
11 Access to broadband internet for work and school is  
12 essential for the city's recovery for the pandemic.  
13 But broadband is still not evenly distributed across  
14 New York City and affordability is a high barrier for  
15 the over 13 percent of households without a home  
16 internet connection and those who must rely on only a  
17 smart phone for their internet services.

18 Broadband internet is particularly important for  
19 New York City. Public school students who rely on  
20 the internet as they do their homework and  
21 assignments, even as school has returned in person in  
22 classes.

23 The internet master plan was released in January  
24 2020, under the previous mayoral administration right  
25 before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. To expand  
broadband access for New Yorkers, today, I look

1 forward to hearing about and discussing the process  
2 of the city has made in the expansion as well as the  
3 next steps the current administration plan as it  
4 works to ensure internet connectivity for all New  
5 Yorkers. I would like thank the Chair and my  
6 colleagues in government who produced amazing  
7 legislation today. I'm looking forward to hearing  
8 from the Administration. Thank you Chair.

10 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: I'd also like to  
11 recognize Council Member David Carr is joining us  
12 this afternoon.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Do you want to introduce?

14 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: I'm going to introduce  
15 Council Member Bob Holden.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Okay, thank you Chair.  
17 In transparency, Intro. 112 would require the  
18 Department of Information and Technology and  
19 Telecommunications, to create and maintain an online  
20 portal containing information related to franchise  
21 agreements for the provision of cable television  
22 services. The public will easily be able to view and  
23 that's hopefully view the best available data on  
24 rates for any broadband internet services offered by  
25

3 franchises separated by broadband technology speed  
4 and zip code.

5 When a contract ends, DoITT will state how many  
6 years the contract lasted, the rates of service and  
7 additional relevant information. The bill requires  
8 all franchise agreements signed after 2006 to be  
9 posted in a searchable, machine-made able format.  
10 Transparency bills, trust, incredibility and  
11 institutions. The public should be able to  
12 understand city contracts and how we do business as a  
13 city.

14 My bill is a step in this direction, and I want  
15 to thank the Chairs, but I just want also want to say  
16 that you just can't list the contracts alright,  
17 because that's 50, 60, 100 pages. So, you have to  
18 summarize it and make it where somebody can compare  
19 and that's what this bill does.

20 Not, I know your testimony you're going to say we  
21 have that. Yeah, you have 100 pages for each  
22 contract that nobody can decipher, and nobody will.  
23 Let's do a comparison. Let's do a - and summarize it  
24 you know for every day use and not for somebody who  
25 is going to read 100 and something pages. Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you Council Member  
4 Holden. I'd also like to recognize Council Member  
5 Hanks who is joining us over Zoom this afternoon.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Chair. Good  
7 afternoon everyone and next, we'll hear testimony  
8 from the Administration, and we have Brett Sikoff,  
9 the Executive Director of Mobile Telecommunication  
10 Franchise and Chantal Senatus, the General Council of  
11 OTI.

12 BRETT SIKOFF: Good afternoon Chair Gutiérrez and  
13 Riley and members of the City Council Committee on  
14 Technology and Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises.  
15 My name is Brett Sikoff, and I am the Executive  
16 Director of Franchise Administration for the Office  
17 of Technology and Innovation or OTI.

18 Here with me today, Associate Commissioner and  
19 Acting General Counsel Chantal Senatus. Thank you  
20 for the opportunity to testify today on one of OTI's  
21 largest priorities, equitable broadband access.

22 OTI, under the leadership of Chief Technology  
23 Officer Matthew Fraser, oversees several initiatives  
24 to bring broadband access to historically underserved  
25 communities. We believe not having reliable,  
affordable access to broadband severely limits large

3 segments of the population from fully participating  
4 in society. Internet access is not a luxury, but a  
5 necessity akin to a utility. The pandemic brought  
6 the digital divide into focus, laying bare the gaps  
7 in learning and productivity for those who did not  
8 have the access at their fingertips.

9 The city's broadband strategy and approach has  
10 benefited from the consolidation of the city's  
11 technology offices under the broader OTI umbrella.  
12 Under my team, we have brought together the city's  
13 franchise authority, previously under legacy DoITT,  
14 and have aligned it with the mission to support  
15 ubiquitous broadband adoption, previously under  
16 legacy MOCTO. We have been able to take a more  
17 holistic view of existing programs, contracts, and  
18 franchises and a cap for where gaps remain.

19 Further, we can continue to move the ball forward  
20 in bringing in more internet service providers to  
21 give New Yorkers affordable and reliable service,  
22 while also considering short-term solutions that  
23 address this urgent need.

24 That is why earlier today, Mayor Adams and CTO  
25 Fraser announced the launch of Big Apple Connect, a  
program that will make free high-speed internet and

1 basic cable TV available to approximately 300,000 New  
2 Yorkers living in more than 200 NYCHA developments by  
3 the end of 2023. Today, more than 100 developments,  
4 residents are eligible for this new benefit. Once  
5 its rollout is completed, Big Apple Connect is  
6 projected to be the largest municipal program to  
7 cover the cost of internet for public housing  
8 residents. This program will provide residents of  
9 NYCHA developments a free offering that consists of  
10 in-home high-speed internet, basic cable TV service  
11 and common are Wi-Fi hotspots selected in  
12 consultation with NYCHA.  
13

14 To get results in a short time frame, we decided  
15 to request proposal from existing New York City cable  
16 television franchisees, all of whom already have  
17 infrastructure throughout NYCHA, nearly eliminating  
18 the need for additional capital investment with the  
19 ability to quickly deliver services. In the last few  
20 years, we have entered into three-year agreements -  
21 uh, excuse me, in the last few months, we have  
22 entered into three-year agreements for a bulk  
23 purchase of services at a low price with Altice,  
24 Charter, Altice Optimum and Charter Spectrum. These  
25 two companies will collectively cover the majority of

3 developments owned and managed by NYCHA. The city is  
4 continuing to negotiate with Verizon, which has a  
5 citywide cable television franchise.

6 In addition to making this available within the  
7 year, our goal is to make enrollment in a program as  
8 seamless as possible. Existing eligible customers of  
9 Altice Optimum and Charter Spectrum, living in NYCHA  
10 developments will automatically be enrolled in a  
11 program and will only be billed for additional  
12 services they choose to purchase directly. Customers  
13 will receive email notifications and mailers  
14 explaining why their bills were lowered, as well as  
15 information on Big Apple Connect. Residents without  
16 existing service will be able to reach out to the  
17 companies directly or can sign-up during on-site  
18 enrollment events conducted by the companies in  
19 partnership with OTI.

20 The program began in a pilot phase available at  
21 eight developments across all five boroughs,  
22 including Mott Haven and Patterson in the Bronx,  
23 Langston Hughes and Brownsville in Brooklyn, Polo  
24 Grounds in Manhattan, Queensbridge and Woodside in  
25 Queens, and Stapleton in Staten Island. The next



1  
2 phase of sites selected are available on  
3 nyc.gov/bigappleconnect.

4 Big Apple Connect is meant to be complimentary to  
5 the existing Affordable Connectivity Program or ACP.  
6 This federal program provides eligible households  
7 with a \$30 a month benefit toward internet service.  
8 Although it is not possible to use the ACP benefit  
9 and Big Apple Connect for in-home broadband service,  
10 all eligible households will have the opportunity to  
11 apply ACP to cellular data service. For as long as  
12 ACP is available, OTI will continue to promote and  
13 support its adoption. We appreciate that the Council  
14 has taken many steps to partner with organizations to  
15 bring awareness to the program and help residents  
16 sign up for ACP across the city.

17 Support of programs to provide low or no cost  
18 broadband is one of many strategies OTI oversees.  
19 The city must enable ubiquitous fiber infrastructure  
20 in order for these services to be provided. At the  
21 core of many of the broadband services with which the  
22 committees may be familiar are franchises. A  
23 franchise is a contract that allows use of the city's  
24 rights of way, our streets, sidewalks, and other  
25 public assets, to deliver services to the public in

3 exchange for franchise fees. In other words, the  
4 city grants a limited right to use these valuable  
5 assets and in return, receives much-needed revenue.

6 The New York City Council plays a crucial role in  
7 the franchise process by passing authorizing  
8 resolutions that allow us to solicit and enter into  
9 franchise agreements.

10 OTI administers several franchises, including  
11 cable television, public communications structures,  
12 mobile telecommunications, and information services.  
13 It is important to note that although the cable  
14 television franchises, Charter, Altice and Verizon,  
15 all also provide broadband services. The franchise  
16 agreements are limited to the provision of cable  
17 television to the extent required by federal law.

18 Link NYC remains a cornerstone of the broadband  
19 offerings provided via franchise agreement. Nearly  
20 2,000 kiosks have been deployed in all five boroughs,  
21 reaching over 11.8 million subscribers. Recently, we  
22 unveiled Link5G, the newly designed kiosk that  
23 provides all the same amenities as the original Link,  
24 free Wi-Fi, nationwide calling, device charging and  
25 quick access to 911 and government services, with the  
added benefit of multi-tenant 5G. We continue to

3 work with the franchisee, City Bridge, to bring more  
4 links to underserved areas in the outer boroughs and  
5 above 96<sup>th</sup> Street over the coming years.

6 In addition to Link 5G, my team administers  
7 mobile telecommunications franchises. These  
8 franchises allow companies to build 4G and 5G  
9 equipment on light poles and utility poles. Through  
10 this franchise, mobile carriers are able to enhance  
11 and densify their cellular networks, providing  
12 crucial service to anyone who owns a cell phone.

13 More recently, [LOST AUDIO 17:10] for these companies  
14 to build their equipment [LOST AUDIO 17:13-17:17] is  
15 equitable.

16 Finally, information services franchises are held  
17 by companies that install and operate fiber optic  
18 cable in city streets for the purpose of offering or  
19 supporting voice, data, and/or business to business  
20 internet service across the five boroughs. In the  
21 past year, the city has entered into ten of these  
22 franchises, and we continue to consider qualified  
23 companies on a rolling basis. These companies fiber  
24 build, provides the foundation for more broadband  
25 companies to enter the marketplace, with the hope  
that more competition will result in lower prices.

3 While we cannot direct the franchisees precisely  
4 where to build, we have put incentives in place to  
5 encourage build outside of the Manhattan core,  
6 similarly to our other franchises.

7 We know that building the foundation for  
8 broadband and providing the means to access it is not  
9 enough, which is why OTI also funds and administers  
10 connected communities, a long-term, large-scale,  
11 digital inclusion initiative that provides digital  
12 literacy and employment resources in historically  
13 underserved areas for thousands of New Yorkers every  
14 year. In partnership with New York City Parks Media  
15 Education Labs, the Department for the Aging's Older  
16 Adult Centers, NYCHA's Digital Van Program, and the  
17 city's three library systems, Connected Communities  
18 underwrites over 100 public sites, to enable the  
19 critical delivery of devices, software, mobile  
20 hotspots, and over 24,000 hours annually of high-  
21 quality digital literacy programs that help New  
22 Yorkers gain essential skills.

23 I will now quickly turn to the legislation being  
24 considered today.

25 Intro. 112, sponsored by Council Member Holden,  
would require OTI to post information on our website

3 related to cable franchise agreements. We recently  
4 updated our website and do provide information about  
5 the cable franchises. We continue to improve it and  
6 keep content fresh, and we would be happy take  
7 feedback from Council on this page in particular.

8 Next, Intro. 241, sponsored by Chair Gutiérrez,  
9 would require OTI, in consultation with the  
10 Department of Education to provide all students with  
11 mobile hotspots. While we are all too familiar with  
12 struggles that students face during the height of the  
13 COVID-19 pandemic. It is our understanding that  
14 students in need may already be able to request the  
15 devices directly from DOE. During the time period of  
16 remote instruction DOE acquired over 700,000 mobile  
17 data-enabled devices and approximately 30,000  
18 hotspots that were distributed to schools for use as  
19 needed.

20 DOE continues to have a process in place for  
21 schools to ask for device needs, as necessary.  
22 Procuring mobile hotspot devices to all students  
23 would be a sizable investment in both hardware and  
24 monthly service fees. More discussion is needed to  
25 determine where the gaps remain to ensure that any

3 large investment is benefiting those who need it  
4 most.

5 Council Member Won's bill, Intro. 440 would  
6 require OTI to establish a program whereby city  
7 agencies provide wireless network access for the  
8 public to utilize the internet. We appreciate the  
9 spirit of this proposal, which appears to seek to  
10 leverage current Wi-Fi networks for public use. Upon  
11 review of the bill text, it remains unclear whether  
12 the proposal seeks to provide service to an agency's  
13 walk-in customers or to the general public.

14 Further, the capabilities of an agency to provide  
15 this service is highly dependent on numerous factors  
16 and they require significant infrastructure  
17 investments. We'd like to discuss further what the  
18 sponsor envisions with this bill, considering the  
19 operational and fiscal implications as currently  
20 written.

21 And lastly, Intro. 599, also sponsored by Council  
22 Member Won, would require OTI to provide written  
23 materials about affordable internet for wide-ranging  
24 outreach to students and families. OTI cares deeply  
25 about promoting low or no cost broadband service to  
those most in need and we appreciate the Council's

3 focus on educating students and their families about  
4 the programs that are available to them. We have  
5 collaborated with DOE to promote ACP in the past and  
6 would like to discuss with DOE and the Council  
7 additional strategies to better get the word out  
8 about current offerings and identify which programs  
9 would be appropriate to promote.

10 I'm now happy to take Council Member questions.

11 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you for your  
12 testimony. I'd also like to recognize Council Member  
13 Valentino from our Tech Committee.

14 My first question is regarding the Internet  
15 Master plan. It was announced in January of 2020 and  
16 the announcement for Internet Master Plan was  
17 announced back in 2020 and \$157 million were  
18 allocated towards the plan as a capital investment  
19 into 2021. How much of this money has been spent?

20 BRETT SIKOFF: Thanks Council Member for the  
21 question. So, the Internet Master Plan ultimately  
22 burnt this RFP that was issued. Considered a lot of  
23 what the core tenants of what this Administration is  
24 interested in, which is expanding broadband,  
25 expanding a fiber infrastructure and diversifying the  
marketplace.

3 As this Administration came in, we took a hard  
4 look at the master plan to see where there are  
5 duplications of not just fiber infrastructure around  
6 the city but duplication of money that's being spent  
7 elsewhere in other programs.

8 So, while we take that look and we continue to do  
9 so, uhm, it's one of the real reasons why we came up  
10 with the Big Apple Connect program, because we wanted  
11 an immediate solution to the problems that we all  
12 acknowledge persist and have persisted far too long.

13 So, while the master plan contemplated a  
14 multiyear long and a very expensive \$157 million  
15 investment, Big Apple Connect will help citizens  
16 immediately. Hundreds of thousands of citizens, tens  
17 of thousands of households will immediately get  
18 service and we're going to continue to explore what  
19 opportunities in the master plan can be leveraged for  
20 use going forward.

21 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: So, what amount of the  
22 original \$157 million have been spent. Has any of  
23 that money gone towards Big Apple Connect?

24 BRETT SIKOFF: No, it has not. Big Apple Connect  
25 is being funded through other sources. That's going  
to be part of a budget plan moving forward but the



1  
2 money for the Internet Master Plan remains and we're  
3 just considering what is the appropriate -

4 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: So, it's untouched at  
5 this point because okay.

6 BRETT SIKOFF: It's my understanding, yes.

7 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, uhm, during the  
8 April 2021 hearing on updates to the Internet Master  
9 Plan, former CTO John Paul Farmer testified that in  
10 May of 2021, CTO would review proposals from the  
11 universal solicitation from Broadband RFP received  
12 from internet service providers and begin  
13 negotiations on the process of licensing city assets.  
14 Where are we now in this process?

15 BRETT SIKOFF: So, the very first phase I believe  
16 of the Master Plan is already in progress, so those  
17 are the RFEI vendors that some of you may be familiar  
18 with.

19 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: But just to clarify, are  
20 the - can you just clarify what the RFEI's are for?

21 BRETT SIKOFF: Yeah, sure, so it's for providing  
22 service to NYCHA residents at various NYCHA  
23 facilities, using fixed wireless, different  
24 solutions. So, it was a way to give access. There  
25 was no cost to the city. It was a way to provide

3 access to small, local MWBE providers. Uhm, and so  
4 they're already in progress. They're building out.  
5 They're expanding their service to those NYCHA  
6 developments that they cover.

7 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: And can you tell us the  
8 current status of the universal solicitation for  
9 broadband RFP?

10 BRETT SIKOFF: Uhm, so that— my understanding is  
11 that's a part of the master plan and that's all being  
12 considered to be reevaluated.

13 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: So, also on hold?

14 BRETT SIKOFF: Correct.

15 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: I'd also like to  
16 recognize Council Members Erik Bottcher and Council  
17 Member Francisco Moya joining us.

18 Now, you said in your first response, that the  
19 Big Apple City?

20 BRETT SIKOFF: Connect.

21 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: What is it?

22 BRETT SIKOFF: Big Apple Connect.

23 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: I can't help but want to  
24 say something else. Big Apple Connect, was that we  
25 needed immediate solutions. However, I am concerned  
because Administration to Administration often goes

3 into these big investment projects, kind of doing a  
4 very reactive; very like something that we need right  
5 now. A big part of that internet master plan was to  
6 really be comprehensive. All major cities engage in  
7 an internet master plan. There's no reason why our  
8 city should not be working through this in earnest.  
9 What can you tell me is the main reason that the  
10 master plan has been or is on pause? And can you  
11 tell us what the timeline is for it to be  
12 reactivated?

13 BRETT SIKOFF: So, the master plan was devised  
14 and going back a couple of years now. It wasn't very  
15 - there were a number of agencies that were  
16 considered. DoITT, the legacy DoITT was not one of  
17 them. It is very much done outside of DoITT sphere  
18 because of all the other programs that we're doing.  
19 Expanding the information services franchise  
20 opportunities. A lot of the fiber infrastructure has  
21 been increased since that plan was in place, and  
22 we're concerned about duplication of efforts. So,  
23 duplication of new fiber. Duplication of money being  
24 spent on the same stuff.

25 And so, we -

3 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: But duplication because  
4 of the new initiative?

5 BRETT SIKOFF: Not just Big Apple Connect but all  
6 the other things we're doing, expanding Link NYC.  
7 Like I said, the Information Services Franchise. All  
8 that is already in motion and because of the  
9 considerable investment proposed into the internet  
10 master plan, we thought it was prudent to take a  
11 really hard look at it and see to make sure that it's  
12 being surgically implied and we — as you said, a lot  
13 of other cities have an internet master plan and we  
14 intend to unveil a plan moving forward but for now,  
15 we want to — there's an immediate need for services.

16 NYCHA is just one area. They're not, you know,  
17 there's other segments of the population that are in  
18 need of additional broadband, which has been NYCHA.  
19 But there's an obvious need for service there and  
20 using the existing providers to provide the service,  
21 given that there's infrastructure already in place,  
22 we can stop the bleeding and get the service to the  
23 people where it's needed most. And also look at  
24 intermediate and long-term plans for moving forward.

25 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Right. Uhm, I hear that.  
I think that I can appreciate; obviously, we want to

3 be mindful of where there's duplication, but I do  
4 want to keep bringing it back to the internet master  
5 plan because I think again, it's crucial that we  
6 consider to look at this comprehensively.

7 I do know that according to the internet master  
8 plan, the city will enable service delivery by  
9 supporting and promoting the use of new shared  
10 infrastructure that meet the city's broadband  
11 standards for equity, performance, affordability,  
12 privacy and choice. What are the standards for  
13 equity, performance, affordability, privacy and  
14 choice that the agency had in mind? And how would  
15 those standards be met?

16 And could you also just elaborate on privacy and  
17 choice standards?

18 BRET SIKOFF: Yeah, we'll given that the plan  
19 was devised under the previous administration under a  
20 different agency.

21 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Do your best.

22 BRET SIKOFF: Yeah, no, everything you described  
23 is obviously essential right. It's generic, it's  
24 important. Not to suggest that it's not. So,  
25 certainly it is and anything we do moving forward  
will speak to those basic tenants. Uhm, but in terms

3 of choice, really it's not a diverse marketplace. We  
4 have the existing cable companies that have largely  
5 our internet services, Altice, Charter and Verizon.  
6 Getting a diverse set of companies, you know that can  
7 compete with them, that can do it at an affordable  
8 price, at affordable rates is essential to anything  
9 we do moving forward.

10 So, Big Apple Connect, while one obviously very  
11 important step in the right direction, there's other  
12 opportunities for expanding to identify those smaller  
13 companies. And what I mentioned earlier about the  
14 RFEI, we are moving forward with those companies.  
15 Harlem, Sky Packet, Stary, they are all actively  
16 providing service and we'll continue to support them  
17 to the extent we can and grow those companies.

18 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Were there duplicate  
19 applicants that applied to the RFEI and the Internet  
20 Master Plan RFP?

21 BRETT SIKOFF: That I don't know.

22 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, and so, and I just  
23 want to confirm what you just said, that there is the  
24 intention of this agency to continue with any of  
25 smaller providers that apply to the RFEI but Big

3 Apple Connect right now is currently working with  
4 which providers?

5 BRETT SIKOFF: Big Apple Connect is working with  
6 the cable companies. The Charter and Altice, because  
7 again, that's where the infrastructure is. There was  
8 no construction required. It's just a matter of  
9 working with them and the communities to turn up the  
10 service. They will not be duplicating the efforts of  
11 the RFEI. The RFEI vendors, the developments that  
12 they are working in will not intersect with Big Apple  
13 Connect, at least for the time being. So, we  
14 encourage those companies to continue to apply,  
15 continue to provide the great, low-cost service that  
16 they're currently -

17 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: So, in theory, either  
18 with Big Apple Connect or the RFEI designation, all  
19 NYCHA residents will have access?

20 BRETT SIKOFF: That's the plan, yeah.

21 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay. Uhm, in a previous  
22 testimony, John Paul Farmer mentioned that the most  
23 internet service provider - that most internet  
24 service providers collect data on their customers.  
25 Such data can include IP addresses, browsing  
histories and other sensitive information. Our data

3 collection and providers in a data collection policy  
4 factors you consider when reviewing proposals from  
5 ISP's, whether for universal broadband, Big Apple  
6 Connect, and connecting NYCHA to other initiatives?

7 BRETT SIKOFF: So, yes, so data privacy of course  
8 is paramount for the city. We've recently expanded  
9 our privacy and security efforts. I would note  
10 though and I'll turn it over to Chantal as well. Our  
11 cable franchisees are limited to cable T.V. service.  
12 Our franchise agreements as written are limited to  
13 their ability to provide cable television service.  
14 So, anything where it goes into the broadband, we  
15 have limited authority. So, further on, Chantal if  
16 you want to -

17 CHANTAL SENATUS: Excellent, thank you. Good  
18 afternoon Council Members. Uhm, so just to talk a  
19 little bit more about privacy. With respect to the  
20 agreements that we have with Charter and Altice, and  
21 when we follow a general process with respect to  
22 OTI's formerly DoITT's contracts, where there are  
23 writers associated with maintaining privacy in a way  
24 that comports with not reviewing city data and  
25 keeping peoples personal information private for the  
purposes of providing the work for the city.



3 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, can you share a  
4 little bit more about what those standards look like  
5 that are built into to ensure privacy for New  
6 Yorkers?

7 CHANTAL SENATUS: I will have to get back to you  
8 with respect to the specifics. There are writers  
9 attached to our contracts that I can make available  
10 to you.

11 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Yeah, I think I would  
12 love it and it's important folks to know what that  
13 looks like. Uhm, I kind of want to go back to the  
14 RFEI and Big Apple Connect. Then curious what was  
15 the decision? If there was a difference in urgency  
16 between those developments that would be covered by  
17 the RFEI versus Big Apple Connect. What was the  
18 rubric, or the matrix utilized to select those  
19 developments? I just would love to know a little bit  
20 more. This is all, you know this is brand new  
21 information as of a few hours ago. So, if you could  
22 share a little bit more.

23 BRETT SIKOFF: Yeah, so the hundred and I believe  
24 it's 27 developments that are announced today for the  
25 Big Apple Connect Program that are made available to  
residents there, represent a cross section of the

3 city from all five boroughs, developments big and  
4 small, some are individual buildings. So, we thought  
5 we got a diverse, like I said cross section of the  
6 city. The RFPI vendors, those NYCHA developments  
7 have been assigned to them for some time, so they've  
8 been providing service and continue to build out at  
9 those locations.

10 So, we think we have a good representation. And  
11 as announced today, there will be additional  
12 developments announced in 2023 as we continue to  
13 expand the program for the Apple Connect.

14 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, uhm, I wanted to  
15 ask about - I don't know if you can speak to this but  
16 I'm aware that people who worked on the internet  
17 master plan back in 2020 are still part of the new  
18 agency. I understand that some of them might be  
19 under strategic initiatives. Is that correct? Are  
20 there still folks that were working on the master  
21 plan still a part of OTI?

22 BRETT SIKOFF: Yes, yes.

23 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, are any of them  
24 here today?

25 BRETT SIKOFF: Uhm, I do not believe so.

3 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Great, okay. Uhm, did  
4 your office review the proposals received by the  
5 internet service providers submitted as a response to  
6 the universal solicitation for broadband RFP process?

7 BRETT SIKOFF: That, I would have to get back to  
8 you on.

9 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, uhm, and did any of  
10 these proposals include bulk purchasing options?

11 BRETT SIKOFF: Sorry, I'd have to get back to  
12 you.

13 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, my last question  
14 before I pass it off to Chair Riley, uhm, on June 1,  
15 2022, Gothamist reported that an official  
16 spokesperson for the Office of Technology and  
17 Innovation stated that the broadband policy for the  
18 city would be focusing on "more near-term solutions."  
19 Can you please provide examples of these near-term  
20 solutions and your expected timeline for implementing  
21 them?

22 BRETT SIKOFF: Well, first and foremost is Big  
23 Apple Connect. You know that's obviously a huge  
24 announcement today. It covers a lot of New Yorkers  
25 who need the service, need it right now and as of  
today, folks who couldn't afford internet service are

3 going to get it for free. Folks who are paying  
4 exorbitant rates and we recognize that some of the  
5 rates have gone up over the years to be able to get  
6 their service for free or cut their bills  
7 dramatically. So, that first and foremost is our you  
8 know big announcement.

9 And then, as we said, we're continuing to  
10 evaluate the master plan to see where there is  
11 opportunities to provide additional services.

12 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: And then can you also  
13 just verify the duration, the intended duration of  
14 the Big Apple -

15 BRETT SIKOFF: Connect.

16 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Gosh, connect. Does  
17 anybody else want to Circuit? It's just me? I'm  
18 really trying to be better. Uhm, just to confirm, is  
19 that a duration of three years?

20 BRETT SIKOFF: It's a three-year contract.

21 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, and so, what  
22 happens after three years?

23 BRETT SIKOFF: Well, we'll continue to evaluate  
24 this as we do everything kind of holistically.  
25 What's working, what's not working, what we can  
improve on, and we'll consider all options.

3 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, uhm, I do have some  
4 questions about funding but I'm going to - I'm going  
5 to hold off. I just have a couple questions about  
6 your testimony. You mentioned that there would also  
7 be Wi-Fi hotspots selected in consultation with  
8 NYCHA. I'm deeply concerned NYCHA is not an  
9 authority that I think is famous for their ability to  
10 really like engage with tenants, so can you explain a  
11 little bit about what that - what does that process  
12 look like and who are the professionals at NYCHA that  
13 are going to be working with you on hotspot  
14 connection.

15 BRETT SIKOFF: Thank you for that question and I  
16 should have clarified earlier. So, as part of the  
17 Get Connected and the agreements we have signed with  
18 those cable companies, they are required to build out  
19 Wi-Fi hotspots to strategically place locations  
20 within the development. So, community centers, rec  
21 centers, laundry rooms, wherever we think that  
22 they'll get good use.

23 So, that's when we talk about working with NYCHA,  
24 we're going to work with them. People on the ground,  
25 tenant association presidents, property managers,

3 other NYCHA staff to identify the locations that are  
4 best suited for those hotspots.

5 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Great, I would love to  
6 continue just to touch base with you all on what  
7 those interactions look like and that they really are  
8 meaningful. Uhm, okay thank you, so I'm going to  
9 pass it over to Chair Riley.

10 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you Chair. Just to  
11 piggyback off of NYCHA. Thank you so much for your  
12 testimony today. According to your – the president  
13 to Big Apple Connect, uh, NYCHA residents will have  
14 free internet and basic cable and through the NYCHA  
15 RFP, NYCHA residents will have internet access and  
16 will assisted with applying for discounted service  
17 packages provided through the federal, affordable  
18 connectivity program. How do you envision to service  
19 rendered by the NYCHA RFP and Big Apple Connect to  
20 coexist and do you foresee them overlap?

21 BRETT SIKOFF: Thanks for the question Chair  
22 Riley. So, we thought very carefully about how to  
23 ensure that they do not overlap. We don't want to  
24 expend money and city money on where there is  
25 duplication of it. So, with respect to the RFEI  
vendors who are providing the service today, they're

1 providing service I believe to about \$15 per month,  
2 which is offset by the federal affordable  
3 connectivity or ACP benefit.  
4

5 So, we continue to promote the program, the  
6 federal program which is in effect for as long as  
7 there's funding available, so that residents who get  
8 the service are able to get it essentially for free.

9 So, we know that there's been a number of Council  
10 Members who have been on the ground at certain  
11 locations throughout the city, just to get folks to  
12 sign up for the service and we encourage them to do  
13 so. We provide information on our website and we're  
14 going to continue to get the word out as it relates  
15 to the RFEI, the developments assigned to the RFEI  
16 program.

17 With respect to the Apple Connect, we're going to  
18 be on the ground working with communities. We  
19 recently created a community engagement manager  
20 position so that we have one on one contacts with all  
21 tenant association presidents, with property managers  
22 and we're attending community board - uh, excuse me  
23 community council meetings with all the TA presidents  
24 to get the word out to make sure folks understand  
25 what the program is, what it isn't. What the

3 benefits are available to them and if they're in an  
4 RFEI development, what those benefits are as well.

5 So, we think we have a comprehensive strategy for  
6 getting the information out to the folks that need  
7 it.

8 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: What percentages of NYCHA  
9 residents currently have free or low-cost broadband  
10 in their units as a result of the NYCHA RFP and Big  
11 Apple Connect and could you please tell us more about  
12 these programs and their current status?

13 BRETT SIKOFF: Sure, so as of today, prior to the  
14 announcement, we had a pilot and a number of eight  
15 developments throughout the five boroughs for Big  
16 Apple Connect. There are about 7,000 enrollees so  
17 far. Folks who either had existing service, who  
18 converted to the free service or folks that had  
19 nothing whatsoever and haven't been able to sign on.

20 So, really encouraged by those numbers and we're  
21 going to continue to see those, particularly as new  
22 developments come under the program. And as it  
23 relates to the RFEI vendors who are also building out  
24 and expanding their service, they're providing  
25 various types of solutions. Some are doing fixed  
wireless, some are doing wireless in unit, excuse me,



3 fiber to the unit to get service in side there. Some  
4 are doing common area Wi-Fi. I don't have numbers  
5 with me in terms of the subscriptions to those  
6 vendors as yet, but we're going to - it's part of  
7 this program, we're going to comprehensively look at  
8 who is adopting, whose, you know areas where we need  
9 to do a little bit more to identify those without  
10 service and make sure they get connected with one of  
11 these programs.

12 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. The IMP according  
13 to the previous CTO plan to prioritize MWBE  
14 businesses and small service providers, when awarding  
15 contracts. Does the current administration plan to  
16 continue this commitment?

17 BRETT SIKOFF: Absolutely, which is again one of  
18 the reasons why we - those developments where those  
19 small companies, the MWBE's, the local companies are  
20 building out. We wanted to leave them to do what  
21 they're doing, the great work that they're doing  
22 there and see where there's opportunities to expand.

23 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Will at some point all NYCHA  
24 buildings be covered under your current programs, or  
25 will some buildings be prioritized?

3 BRETT SIKOFF: So, we prioritize a number of  
4 buildings just for this first round through 2022. We  
5 fully expect that if not all in most NYCHA  
6 developments that are owned and managed by NYCHA will  
7 be covered under this program.

8 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: And uh, this pilot program,  
9 the lengths of used houses in Brooklyn, Brownsville  
10 houses in Brooklyn, Mott Haven houses in the Bronx,  
11 Passive houses in the Bronx, Polar Ground Towers in  
12 Harlem, Queens Bridge Houses in Queens, Woodside  
13 Houses in Queens and Stapleton Houses in Staten  
14 Island. Why were these developments chosen for this  
15 sites?

16 BRETT SIKOFF: Sure, so we work with NYCHA staff  
17 to identify locations that did not have other  
18 programs in place us RFEI's and we're yet again  
19 represent a good cross section of the city. So, we  
20 got all the five boroughs covered. Uhm, something  
21 that's bigger and smaller, lengths of uses only three  
22 buildings. Queens Bridge is as many of you know is  
23 enormous. So, we wanted to get a sense of scale and  
24 see what adoption concerns there are or interest in  
25 the community and it's helping inform our steps  
moving forward.

3 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: What would be the internet  
4 service uploading and download speeds be for these  
5 buildings and are service fees defined in your  
6 contract terms?

7 BRETT SIKOFF: They sure are. So, for the  
8 Charter and excuse me Altice, contracts they're a  
9 minimum of 300 megabytes per second for download.  
10 And they're very with respect to the uploads, I  
11 believe it's 15 megabytes per second for one and the  
12 other one I believe is going to be 300 symmetrical.  
13 And as part of the Altice deployment, they're also  
14 expanding their fiber presence. So, as they turn on  
15 the customers, they are going to install and replace  
16 their coax with fiber.

17 So, it's a great opportunity to expand and  
18 improve the infrastructure that's there today.

19 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: What is your timeline for  
20 completing the program build out in these NYCHA  
21 buildings?

22 BRETT SIKOFF: So, because the build out is  
23 essentially got right, the infrastructure is already  
24 in place, which is one of the primary reasons why we  
25 wanted to go with the cable companies to immediately  
fix the problem, uhm, there really isn't a

3 construction effort aside from building out the Wi-Fi  
4 hotspots. It's really that awareness campaign, the  
5 communications with the communities to make sure that  
6 they know these programs are available to them. They  
7 know that it's absolutely true. I mean, having been  
8 on the - at a number of NYCHA developments to sign up  
9 folks over these last couple of months. Many people  
10 don't believe it's real right.

11 When you hear a free program and you're just  
12 naturally skeptical and that's understandable, so we  
13 have a considerable amount of work ahead of us to let  
14 the communities know that this is a real program, and  
15 they should sign up.

16 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Regarding shelters, the  
17 previous CTO mentioned family shelters as priorities  
18 for building out broadband. To your knowledge, how  
19 many shelters presently have a free or low-cost  
20 internet connection available to its residents? What  
21 is your plan with regard to wiring up family  
22 shelters?

23 BRETT SIKOFF: So, we thank you for that  
24 question. So, over the last couple of years,  
25 particularly during the pandemic, we wired over 200  
family homeless shelters with Wi-Fi service, in unit

3 Wi-Fi service where there was no service previously.  
4 So, it's not like they had service and were just  
5 providing for free. They had no connection, so it  
6 was a pretty sizable effort. I'd have to get the  
7 exact number.

8 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: How many men shelters did you  
9 wire?

10 BRETT SIKOFF: I don't believe that that was part  
11 of the program that included just men shelters but  
12 I'll have to double check and get back to you. But  
13 it was primarily focused on family shelters to get  
14 kids work out of school or doing work remotely to  
15 make sure that they were connected.

16 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: I just wanted to emphasize  
17 many shelters because we want to make sure that they  
18 get back on their feet and have access to broadband  
19 as well. So, I just wanted to ask that question.

20 To small business, how about small business? Are  
21 there any initiatives to support small businesses and  
22 assist them with their internet procurement and  
23 connectively issues?

24 BRETT SIKOFF: So, we think the real way to do  
25 that is to ensure that uhm, there is pervasive  
broadband access and making - encouraging the market

3 place to lower rates where possible will help  
4 broadband adoption and then again, as we talk about  
5 redoing the internet master plan and analyze that,  
6 we'll be focused on ensuring that there's available  
7 services and the prices are reasonable. So, that's  
8 all part of -

9 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you and I just have two  
10 more questions regarding our education system. As of  
11 fall 2020, between 11 percent and 13 percent of  
12 students in each borough lack access to the internet,  
13 even after the DOE distributed internet connected  
14 iPads for students to use for remote learning. What  
15 percentage of students in each borough lack access to  
16 the internet as of the end of the previous school  
17 year, 2021-2022?

18 BRETT SIKOFF: It's a good question Chair Riley  
19 and I'll have to get back to you on the specific  
20 numbers. But uhm, I would answer this this way,  
21 generally we are trying to expand not just in home  
22 broadband, via Big Apple Connect programs but also  
23 improve our 5 G and Cellular Communications network.

24 So, part of what we do at Franchise  
25 Administration is allow companies to get access to

3 street light poles and other infrastructure to expand  
4 their coverage and improve their identification.

5 So, we think that for those who lack in-home  
6 broadband who do rely – many do on their cellphones  
7 as their primary means of connecting to the internet,  
8 we also have to prioritize making a robust cellular  
9 communication network, particularly in the outer  
10 boroughs. So, I think those two go hand and hand.

11 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Two more  
12 questions. How will you ensure that 100 percent of  
13 students have access to the internet and devices to  
14 connect to the internet? Are you committed to  
15 ensuring 100 percent of NYC students have access to  
16 the internet? If so, what is your timeline for  
17 achieving that? If now, why not?

18 BRETT SIKOFF: That's also a good question and  
19 so, primarily I would refer you to DOE for those, for  
20 the planning in that respect. But I would say that  
21 it's my understanding that students have the  
22 opportunity to request either a device or mobile  
23 hotspot for their home and that DOE makes those  
24 available to them but the first set of questions, I  
25 would refer to DOE.

3 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: And lastly, is there any  
4 continue - I think you mentioned it in your  
5 statement, continued talks with Verizon to actually  
6 have you know part of this initiative being that they  
7 have a lot our labor union workers working for them?

8 BRETT SIKOFF: Yes, absolutely. We're still in  
9 discussions with Verizon about becoming part of the  
10 Apple Connect.

11 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Alright, thank you. I really  
12 appreciate it, thank you. Thank you Chair.

13 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Yeah, thank you Chair. I  
14 wanted to just follow-up on a couple of more of the  
15 questions that you had answered previously. Uhm,  
16 regarding the more near-term solutions, I know  
17 obviously the obvious answer is Big Apple Connect. I  
18 would like to hear a little bit more on some of the  
19 more long-term solutions if you do not have a  
20 definitive timeline for the implementation of the  
21 internet master plan. What are some other examples  
22 of either short-term or long-term plans that are  
23 really going to get New Yorkers connected?

24 BRETT SIKOFF: Yeah, so that's exactly what we're  
25 doing at this point is looking at those, not just  
long term but we do look at long term but those



3 intermediate. Not just today, the Apple Connect,  
4 we're super excited about that but what are we doing  
5 in the next few months, in the next year or so and  
6 then three, four years down the line? So, that's  
7 exactly what's happening today is re-evaluating the  
8 meat of that master plan to see what we can leverage.  
9 What we can move forward with. What we need to  
10 improve on and if anything, need to be revised, we'll  
11 go ahead and do that. But as far as that goes, that  
12 process is underway.

13 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: To the best of your  
14 awareness, will there also be a direct path for some  
15 of these bigger - like Charter and Altice and Verizon  
16 to continue to take the lead on some of these other  
17 initiatives or will we be prioritizing some of the  
18 smaller providers that apply to an RFEI for example?

19 BRETT SIKOFF: Yeah, again, diversifying the  
20 market place is essential. It's essential to provide  
21 competition for the big guys. It's essential to  
22 lower cost for residents. So, I think that's  
23 certainly a priority. Encouraging MWBE's,  
24 encouraging local small mom and pop if you will.  
25 ISP's to get into market place is going to be -

3 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Yeah, but they have  
4 applied is my understanding but what I'm asking you  
5 is if the agency and the administration are ready to  
6 prioritize them in the next near-term solution  
7 initiative that will be launched?

8 BRETT SIKOFF: Yeah, and without committing to  
9 saying for sure that it's going to happen, that's  
10 certainly top of mind for us but uhm, yeah we would  
11 have to explore what exactly those initiatives are  
12 before we assign them to anybody but yes, that's  
13 certainly important to us.

14 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you. Uhm, and so,  
15 I know that you also said that currently through Big  
16 Apple Connect, some of these applicants, these  
17 smaller ISP's are obviously part of the conversation.

18 Can you share a little bit more about those  
19 conversations and when is the timeline - is there a  
20 timeline that you can share as far as when they will  
21 be integrated to the bigger project?

22 BRETT SIKOFF: I don't know that there is a  
23 timeline ready to share at this point but just other  
24 than those conversations are happening internally in  
25 the extent to make some significant progress moving  
forward.

3 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, is there a  
4 particular goal uhm, of these MWBE applicant,  
5 providers that have applied? Is there a particular  
6 goal that you want to be included into this Big Apple  
7 Connect? Is there a number that we are trying to hit  
8 neighborhood by neighborhood. What are some of those  
9 details that you can share?

10 BRETT SIKOFF: Yeah, I would just say generally  
11 it's really about again, not to say it again over and  
12 over again but it's about providing additional  
13 competition and having additional lenders in the  
14 marketplace so that you don't only have one provider  
15 to call or two providers to call if you want an  
16 internet hookup. You'll have opportunities to get  
17 smaller companies you may have never heard of who may  
18 be offering a lower or no cost solution. That's  
19 really what it is. I mean, I've lived here my whole  
20 life and it would be nice; no offense to anyone  
21 there, not to just have one or two providers to call  
22 for service. But again, we want to make it  
23 available.

24 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Yeah, I think we  
25 understand that. I think what I would just like to  
get a sense is what - when can we expect that to

3 happen? You know I think there was a major  
4 announcement happening today. I know the residents  
5 in these developments are excited, but I think it's  
6 also fair for us to ask when are these MWBE's that  
7 have applied, that have already engaged with the  
8 Administration and the agency and when will they be  
9 integrated into even just this initiative? Because  
10 it's a three-year program. How far along are we into  
11 the three years because I'm unsure when it was  
12 launched.

13 BRETT SIKOFF: So, it was just launched this  
14 summer, the end of the summer. We started the pilot,  
15 so we have a ways to go. But with respect to the  
16 smaller companies, it's not just the Apple Connect.  
17 It's not just the RFEI, it's our information services  
18 franchise, which we've recently awarded I believe ten  
19 contracts to companies big and small, so as they  
20 build out their infrastructure and expand service to  
21 the outer boroughs, in which we've incentivized them  
22 via the franchise agreement to - I believe there's no  
23 fee for five years to build out, if they build out in  
24 the outer boroughs. So, that means they're expanding  
25 fiber infrastructure every day, which will ultimately  
expand the offerings that are available.

3 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Sure, I just want to lean  
4 into the equity piece. I would hate for us to put  
5 these smaller applicants, these smaller providers on  
6 the backburner, especially with regard to Big Apple  
7 Connect. I would hate for them to be a part of it  
8 you know at the end of year three.

9 I have just two more questions. This one is  
10 about the shelters piece. Uhm, obviously, we are  
11 aware of the emergency shelters that are coming up.  
12 Many are in our districts already and continue to  
13 open up. Is there a sense that you can share of what  
14 connectivity looks like in these. I know many of  
15 them are hotels, but can you share if there is an  
16 analysis being done to ensure that these emergency  
17 shelters are connected and what can you tell me about  
18 the possibility of devices being provided, as I've  
19 met with shelter residents in my district, a lot of  
20 them obviously are not equipped with smart phones or  
21 tablets. Are still utilizing a What's App Number  
22 from their home country, so I would like to know if  
23 there is a conversation around devices and making  
24 sure these emergency shelters are fully connected.

25 BRETT SIKOFF: Yeah, I don't have information on  
that. It's something that I think DSS would be best

3 positioned to answer in terms of their assessment of  
4 the facilities that they are opening or using. But  
5 we can have that conversation with them to assess the  
6 broadband infrastructure that exists here.

7 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: And what about the  
8 devices piece?

9 BRETT SIKOFF: I'm sorry.

10 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: About offering about  
11 providing devices for shelter residents, especially  
12 in emergency shelters at this point.

13 BRETT SIKOFF: It's a good question but one that  
14 I think we'll talk with DSS about to see what you  
15 know, if they determine a need there, yeah.

16 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you. Regarding  
17 small businesses, your response to supporting small  
18 businesses is a lot of that might depend on the  
19 internet master plan. Kind of like the level of  
20 support that are offered to small businesses. I'm  
21 concerned because there's no start date to this  
22 internet master plan. So, what is the plan to  
23 support these small businesses if we're telling them  
24 to fall back and wait for this internet master plan  
25 to take effect?

3 BRETT SIKOFF: Yeah, and I would call back the  
4 conversation about the information services  
5 franchises because those are the companies that are  
6 building out fiber infrastructure to provide  
7 broadband to commercial and residential locations and  
8 they're doing it you know in normal course of their  
9 business. So, that's happening every day; there's  
10 you know apartments for new fiber bills throughout  
11 the city targeted from big enterprise to local mom  
12 and pop commercial establishments, so all that is  
13 happening as we speak and that's just the normal  
14 course of our franchise administration but to bring  
15 it back to the master plan, which is why we want to  
16 look at it very carefully, surgically and precise to  
17 determine where we can help supplement those other  
18 efforts from the information services franchises as  
19 well as the other broadband programs.

20 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you. Uhm, next,  
21 I'm going to call on Council Member Julie Menin for  
22 her questions.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Oh great, thank you so  
24 much. First of all, I want to thank Chair Gutiérrez,  
25 Chair Riley for holding this incredibly important  
hearing. So, about a year ago, I started working on

3 a pilot program in my district to provide free  
4 broadband NYCHA for NYCHA residents in the district.  
5 You know we brought in a not-for-profit education  
6 super highway, which is the nation's foremost expert  
7 on Wi-Fi. This really came out of work I did as a  
8 City Census Director where I saw first hand that one-

9 The program in my district has been incredibly  
10 successful. It cost no city money. We are signing  
11 up hundreds and hundreds of NYCHA residents and due  
12 to the success of that, nine of my colleagues  
13 including two, who are here today Council Member Won,  
14 and Council Member Bottcher are launching it in their  
15 district. So, the first question I have is how much  
16 money, how much city money specifically is the city  
17 spending on Big Apple Connect?

18 BRETT SIKOFF: Thank you Council Member. So, Big  
19 Apple Connect is when we submit an RFP for the cable  
20 companies to respond to Big Apple Connect, we ask  
21 that they come up with a low-cost proposal and they  
22 both came in at under \$30 per household. So, until  
23 we expand the program to DoITT, we have to figure out  
24 how many people are going to sign up for it. I don't  
25 have necessarily a good estimate to provide to you,



3 so it's going to be \$30, \$30 per household times  
4 however many people sign up for it.

5 With respect to ACP, I would note, again, we  
6 continue to support the program and we're really  
7 excited about it. For those who are enrolled in ACP  
8 are getting the benefit monthly today and if you also  
9 live in a nice facility and Big Apple Connect is  
10 available to you, you will be able to use that ACP  
11 credit towards your mobile wireless plan. So, not  
12 only will you get the free internet and basic cable  
13 T.V. Pursuant to the Big Apple Connect, you could  
14 apply the \$30 ACP credit to your mobile cellular data  
15 plan.

16 So, we think that's a fantastic savings on the  
17 top of the great Big Apple Connect Program, so that  
18 you can double the savings.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: I just want to make sure I  
20 heard you correctly. You're saying you're spending  
21 \$30 per household?

22 BRETT SIKOFF: It's just under, so it varies.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: I guess this sort of begs  
24 my question, which is why when there's a model that's  
25 completely free that scam able, where we negotiated  
with Verizon and with Spectrum to offer an under \$30

3 a month program. We pair it with the \$30 a month  
4 ACP. Why is the city spending any city resources on  
5 a program that we could be doing for free?

6 BRETT SIKOFF: So, ACP is limited. It's limited  
7 in terms of the spending availability, so it's just  
8 like any other program. It's not going to be around  
9 forever, but you do get the added benefit of having  
10 the basic cable T.V. service and as well as being  
11 able to apply the ACP credit for as long as it exists  
12 to your cellular plan. So, it's a good thing all  
13 around we think.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Okay, I just want to  
15 express my concerns about that because while yes, ACP  
16 is not around forever, congress has indicated they  
17 are very likely to renew that. We know that. Given  
18 the fact that this program is only for three years,  
19 and the city is going into very difficult revenue  
20 situation with the budget, I mean, then you're  
21 signing up residents we don't know what the future -  
22 I mean, what is going to happen to those residents if  
23 the city runs out of money after either before three  
24 years or after three years don't renew it?

25 BRETT SIKOFF: That's a good question. And so,  
we're continuing to - we recognize this immediate

3 need to expand broadband access into NYCHA  
4 facilities. ACP has been a great way for folks to  
5 get affordable access to it and we believe that with  
6 the addition of Big Apple Connect and being able to  
7 pivot ACP to other areas of their life and expenses,  
8 it's just a savings all around that, that we just  
9 wouldn't get by ACP alone. So, we do think that it's  
10 going to have a true impact on folks, get access to  
11 them immediately. We recognize the great work that  
12 the Council has done on ACP promotion, and we  
13 encourage that, and we continue to promote it on our  
14 - in the city government. But having Big Apple  
15 Connect using the cable companies to provide the  
16 service and also apply their credit to their  
17 cellphone plan, it's a win-win for us.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: And the last question, are  
19 we going to be able to see those contracts? Are you  
20 going to be providing to the Council with those -  
21 you're going to get them, okay great.

22 BRET SIKOFF: Yup, absolutely.

23 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Next, I'm going to pass  
24 it to Council Member Brewer for questions.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much.  
First, in terms of the contracts, cable. So, I'm

3 concerned about Manhattan Neighborhood Network and  
4 all the other providers public access the city has.  
5 Where are they in the discussions? Because fewer  
6 cable, more streaming, less money for the public  
7 access. Where are we because they don't know, and I  
8 don't know. So, where are we with all of that?

9 CHANTAL SENATUS: So, with respect to uhm -

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I've been doing this work  
11 a long time, so go ahead. I usually know the answers  
12 to the questions I ask.

13 CHANTAL SENATUS: Definitely, so with respect to  
14 the cable renewals, just keep in mind that there's no  
15 harm being done to the cable companies at this point.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: They get their money  
17 based on the subscribers.

18 CHANTAL SENATUS: Just with respect to their  
19 renewal of their franchise. So, while we're kind of  
20 moving forward with the hold over status, we're also  
21 considering our options with respect to efficiently  
22 dealing with our cable renewal. The cable renewals  
23 for our franchises and having those discussions  
24 essentially closer towards the expiration of  
25 Verizon's cable franchise, which is in 2023.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Yeah, but the problem is,  
4 I mean, you can talk to the [INAUDIBLE 1:01:05]. I'm  
5 sure Stuart Shorenstein(SP?) will represent them  
6 well, but the issue is that they and public access,  
7 there are fewer people watching television and using  
8 cable. That's a fact.

9 CHANTAL SENATUS: So, with expense of the public  
10 access, that continues with the term of the cable  
11 franchise, even in holder status.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I know but if they have  
13 less money coming in for cable, then how are those  
14 going to be considered? I mean -

15 CHANTAL SENATUS: That's something that we have  
16 to deal with during our negotiations.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I know but I'm just  
18 bringing it up because you guys didn't bring it up in  
19 your testimony and I am concerned about the access.

20 CHANTAL SENATUS: As are we. We believe that the  
21 access is very important to the city.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, well, I'm just  
23 bringing it up because I didn't hear you mention it  
24 and I want people to know that they need their money  
25 and there may not be as much because ain't nobody  
watching T.V. except me. So, I want to know how

3 they're going to get their money. Okay, I'm just  
4 bringing it up.

5 Number two, with the schools, I am concerned. I  
6 know that you're not the Department of Education.  
7 It's my experience funding technology in the schools  
8 that disappears. It's very nice to say there are  
9 lots of devices given out but they're not all  
10 returned, and we could have another pandemic, but we  
11 also have you know, if we could be more concerned and  
12 thoughtful about online studying with, combining with  
13 in-school etc., people should have devices.  
14 Particularly, the young people who don't have the  
15 opportunity to purchase one etc.

16 So, my concern is, where are you in terms of  
17 collaboration because now you're this big agency. I  
18 can never remember the name of it because I'm still  
19 under DoITT and the reason that the master plan  
20 didn't work is that the CTO and the Chair of  
21 Commissioner of DoITT didn't get along. That's the  
22 real discussion as to why it didn't happen.

23 So, my question is, with the schools, what are  
24 you doing in terms of collaboration? Because you  
25 can't just say, they're doing something and we're

3 doing something. What kind of real collaboration are  
4 you having on that topic with DOE?

5 BRETT SIKOFF: So, I would have to get back to  
6 you Council Member Brewer with respect to that. I  
7 know that's generally with DOE. They make analysis  
8 as to what's best for their students and the  
9 families.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: It does not work for  
11 them.

12 BRETT SIKOFF: And we'll continue to support them  
13 of course, so we'll continue to support DOE.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Now, the libraries and  
15 schools have ERATE, so when I went down to testify at  
16 the FCC, they didn't want to hear about using the  
17 schools and the libraries as hotspots, so that people  
18 in the neighborhood could get connectivity. My  
19 question, where are we with ERATE? Because I should  
20 know and I don't and have you had any discussions, if  
21 it exists in some kind of form that those entities  
22 could be used as hotspot?

23 BRETT SIKOFF: Thanks Council Member. So, I  
24 don't have information for you on ERATE today but  
25 happy to get to you and with respect to your second  
question, are you suggesting using the libraries for

3 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: And schools. They both  
4 have ERATE right and you could in fact, FCC had told  
5 me, you want Gale to have that hotspot, then you're  
6 going to lose your ERATE. I think that was one of  
7 the republicans, I can't remember. But the issue is,  
8 with a progressive FCC, we would like to have - we  
9 don't have municipal Wi-Fi in this city. I don't  
10 know what you call this kiosk. It ain't nothing.  
11 You sit there, you're going to have a bench to use.

12 So, I don't want to hear about that being the  
13 municipal Wi-Fi and nobody in Manhattan want's those  
14 tall things. You're going to have a fight of half of  
15 all the community boards on that. Okay. So, my  
16 question is, what we would like is for the businesses  
17 and residents near a library or near a school, both  
18 of which have ERATE to make that the hotspot. If you  
19 go to a library today on the weekends, you see  
20 somebody sitting outside on a bench getting ERATE  
21 That's what you see. So, we'd like it to go further,  
22 and we'd like it to be official and not me having to  
23 sit on a chair in the bushes by the library because  
24 that's what people do. All weekend, you'll see them  
25 sitting around libraries. Okay, so that ERATE needs  
to be discussed and then just finally, what's



3 underground. Are we ever going to find out what's  
4 going on underground. Verizon is terrible. Verizon  
5 is as bad Altice is as bad as Spectrum. I don't have  
6 any; they're all challenging and working with them is  
7 challenging.

8 So, the underground cable, were you ever able to  
9 get a scenario as to what exists underground?

10 BRETT SIKOFF: So, that's a process that's -

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: It's been going on for 25  
12 years.

13 BRETT SIKOFF: We do have lots of maps of fiber  
14 infrastructure.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Yeah, but not all of  
16 them.

17 BRETT SIKOFF: Uhm, very many of them and we  
18 continue to get updated information from those  
19 providers. So, we do have a pretty extensive fiber  
20 mat from the cable companies as well as the other  
21 providers.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

23 BRETT SIKOFF: Yeah, we can talk about that and  
24 share -

25 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: And then just one quick,  
[INAUDIBLE 1:06:01] sued Verizon. She also tried to

3 get more support for Wi-Fi in the developments. What  
4 happened to her plans? I know she was supposed to  
5 Jefferson for Manhattan. You only have one; we're  
6 supposed to do Jefferson also. What happened to the  
7 work that she did? Was it because it was poorly  
8 done? I know there was lots of challenges apparently  
9 with the companies that were used. What's the status  
10 with what she did?

11 BRETT SIKOFF: I apologize Council Member; I  
12 don't know the status of that, but I would know  
13 regarding the Big Apple Connect Program. Polo grams  
14 was just one of the eight of the pilot but when we  
15 announced the expansion today, I think it's 38  
16 developments in Manhattan are going to be made  
17 available for Big Apple Connect.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: But Jefferson is supposed  
19 to be one of them.

20 BRETT SIKOFF: They'll leave it as -

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I'd like to hear also  
22 what happened with Grumman and with all of their  
23 infrastructure you know gazillion dollars' worth of  
24 interest. Where is it with that gazillion dollars?  
25 And what happened to Mia Whilees (SP?) proposals?

3 Thank you. I could go through more but that's plenty  
4 for now.

5 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you Council Member  
6 Brewer. Next, I'm going to have Council Member  
7 Hanks. Oh, wait, oh, I'm so sorry Council Member  
8 Won. My apologies, go for it.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Thank you so much. Good  
10 afternoon and I do share the sentiments of  
11 celebrating the speed of Big Apple Connect but I also  
12 do share the sentiments with Council Member Gutiérrez  
13 as well as Council Member Menin on this current  
14 contract for the potential of ending within the three  
15 years.

16 So, for the details of the contract that we have  
17 not seen yet, can you explain what happens at the end  
18 of the three years in the case that it does come to  
19 an end, and it is not renewed? Will our NYCHA  
20 residents be able to terminate their contract or will  
21 their be an autorenewal and will they be faced with a  
22 \$200 fee or a monthly bill that they were not  
23 expecting once the 000 disappears?

24 BRETT SIKOFF: Yeah, thank you Council Member for  
25 that. So, at the end of the term of the contract  
should it end at the three years, and I don't know

1 that there's two one-year options for renewal at the  
2 end of it but whenever it does end. Customers of  
3 residents will be given plenty of notice to let them  
4 know that the promotion is expiring, that the program  
5 is expiring and an opportunity to sign up for  
6 whatever promotions available to them at that time.  
7 They could chose to sign up for the additional  
8 service or cancel the service, return the equipment  
9 and they'll be settled with the cable company but  
10 that will be incumbent on us to help with the  
11 awareness and outreach campaign to make sure that  
12 word gets out. And ensure that the cable companies  
13 are proactively reaching out to their customers to  
14 make sure that information gets out there, but we  
15 have every intent to ensure that they are offered  
16 some of the best possible price that's available at  
17 that time.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Yeah, I want to underscore  
20 that for the equipment that they are going to receive  
21 for free now, that there is thorough communication  
22 with the residents in the case that they have to  
23 return as long as they are not overcharged with fees  
24 or fines at the end of the contract in the case that  
25 it does not end up being renewed.

3 And for right now, in my district, I have both  
4 Queens Bridge Houses as well as Woodside Houses under  
5 the Charter Contract. For the auto-enrollment, for  
6 example at Queens Bridge Houses, we have about 65  
7 percent of existing Charter customers, who would like  
8 to be a part of Big Apple Connect. What has been the  
9 communications that has gone out to outreach to allow  
10 the residents to know that they have now been auto  
11 enrolled into this program?

12 BRETT SIKOFF: Yeah, so we have, we've attended a  
13 couple of community council meetings with the local  
14 PSA's in the area, and those meetings, many of you  
15 know represented by all the tenant association  
16 presidents in the housing. So, we've communicated  
17 what the program is, how it works, how citizens can  
18 sign up and we're continue to do that. So, there's  
19 going to be onsite events, cables, tents, giveaways,  
20 sponsored by the cable companies in partnership with  
21 the OTI to get out the word, get folks to come  
22 downstairs, sign up, go door to door, knocking on  
23 doors, put flyers up to extend the awareness of the  
24 campaign, of the program.

25 Uhm, as well as we updated our website with  
information through as a strip so if folks have

3 questions, they can call 301 to get up to date  
4 information about what the program is, who it's  
5 available to and how to get signed up.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: I appreciate all of the  
7 outreach that you all are doing because I've seen it  
8 on the ground, but I do also recommend that Spectrum,  
9 Charter Communications is giving out - is also doing  
10 the outreach on their monthly bill to allow the  
11 individuals customers to be notified. Because with  
12 thousands of residents in my NYCHA, they are not  
13 always at the community events and someone maybe  
14 shocked if they - their bill says 000. Has my term  
15 been terminated or what are the issues here, which  
16 they may not fully understand.

17 BRETT SIKOFF: Thanks, I should have mentioned  
18 that. So, there will be post cards. There will be  
19 emails sent. It will be on the bill. It will say y  
20 and 0 or why the bill went down. It will be all very  
21 clear. We've seen samples of those invoices and it's  
22 abundantly clear what the program is.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Okay, thank you. Then, for  
24 Verizon, Council Member Brewer has mentioned there  
25 has been a lawsuit and then we know that in 2019,  
three years ago, DoITT announced an audit of Altice

3 for overcharging our customers in New York City for  
4 broadband internet. Can you help me understand for  
5 the violation of the franchise agreements, had this  
6 audit been completed and what was the result of this  
7 audit?

8 BRETT SIKOFF: I don't have details on the audit.  
9 I don't know if Council does as well, but we'll get  
10 back to you on that. We'll look into that.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Because I and the Chair of  
12 Contracts, I have real concerns of violators of  
13 certain franchise agreements are continuing to get  
14 large contracts of this matter, especially when we  
15 have MWBE's who are dying to work with the city and I  
16 also want to add that for Charter, for Spectrum, as  
17 you have said, Big Apple Connect is supposed to be  
18 complimentary to the affordable connectivity program  
19 from the federal government.

20 If we are using the \$30 from the Affordable  
21 Connectivity Program for cellular devices or cell  
22 connection, we are physically seeing and we have  
23 heard from our constituents that Spectrum for  
24 example, has turned away my constituents when they  
25 have come with an ACP connect code saying, I would

3 like to register for the ACP and Spectrum has said,  
4 no, you don't need that.

5 So, I would like to make it clear that for these  
6 providers or these vendors, that we are having a  
7 clear communication with them, saying that we want to  
8 do both. Because like you said, we want to have  
9 holistic savings and we want to make sure that  
10 they're not only getting the free cable and Wi-Fi  
11 from Big Apple Connect but if they do already have  
12 the ACP code, we should be encouraging them to say,  
13 okay, Spectrum doesn't allow you to have cell service  
14 but as long as you call your cell service provider,  
15 rather it be T-Mobile, AT&T or whoever else saying,  
16 why don't you use it for that instead of just telling  
17 them that they are out their code.

18 BRET SIKOFF: I appreciate that feedback and  
19 we'll work with the company to ensure that the proper  
20 message is getting out there but -

21 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Thank you. I did have a few  
22 more questions but overall, I'm going to ask for a  
23 follow up on the Biden Administrations Infrastructure  
24 Investment and Jobs Act, for the \$42 billion that is  
25 funding for broadband equity access and deployment  
program for our estates. How much of that money is



1  
2 coming to our city and how much of that is being used  
3 for Big Apple Connect, as well as the American Rescue  
4 Plan as well. So, I will follow up afterwards, thank  
5 you.

6 BRETT SIKOFF: Thanks Council Member. I just  
7 would quickly note out in the IIJA, while I believe  
8 the money is administered by the state, we have  
9 encouraged all of our franchisees, again big and  
10 small to apply of the grants that are available to  
11 them. So, we have regular check-ins with the  
12 franchisees to make sure that money is available.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Also, I want to raise a  
14 concern about cyber security. So, the last time the  
15 city's wireless security protocol was updated was  
16 2014. Is your office working with the Office of  
17 Cyber Command to issue updated cyber security  
18 protocols, Apple goal for a public Wi-Fi? Because I  
19 know that John Paul Farmer was doing that and what is  
20 the progress in drafting these protocols and when can  
21 we expect them? Do you mandate these protocols to be  
22 followed by the internet service providers like  
23 spectrum and optimum? Do you or will you audit  
24 contracted entities to make sure these protocols are  
25 followed? If no, do you plan to do so. Because I

1  
2 know that like you said, there's a lot of distrust in  
3 our NYCHA communities because of how they have been  
4 treated in the past. And they have real concerns  
5 when we are encouraging them to register for ACP and  
6 Big Apple Connect on privacy and they are one of the  
7 most vulnerable.

8 So, we want to curtail any sort of surveillance.  
9 Could you help us understand where we're at?

10 CHANTAL SENATUS: Yes, we're happy to look into  
11 that. To look into the using the protocol for public  
12 Wi-Fi through cyber ban. Of course, we'll look into  
13 that and get back to you. You're welcome.

14 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you Council Member  
15 Won. I apologize again. I want to pass it to  
16 Council Member Hanks and then Council Member Riley.  
17 Oh, okay sorry, we're going to go to Council Member  
18 Riley right now.

19 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you Chair. I just want  
20 to piggyback off of Council Member Won regarding  
21 cyber security. I think she mentioned something  
22 that's very important. When we're bringing programs  
23 like this to our communities, we just want to make  
24 sure that transparency is available for them, and for  
25

3 them to fully understand the program that we're  
4 bringing to them.

5 During our last hearing, related to the IMP,  
6 advocates testified that the biggest missing piece in  
7 the IMP and other incident related city initiative is  
8 a lack of necessary details regarding privacy and  
9 cyber security protections. What cyber security and  
10 privacy protections do we currently require from the  
11 organizations applying to the RFP if any and would  
12 you consider talking more systematically, systematic  
13 actions to address issues relating to cyber security  
14 and data protections?

15 CHANTAL SENATUS: I think we're more than happy  
16 to discuss anyone's concerns about cyber security and  
17 data protection. Those are essentially two large  
18 pillars of what is now part of OTI.

19 So, uhm, I can get back to you with respect to  
20 the cyber security related provisions, to the extent  
21 that they currently exist and then also, with respect  
22 to I think - well, I believe earlier I talked about  
23 the Altice and uhm, and Charter contracts having data  
24 protection provisions associated with that and so, I  
25 can get back to you with that as well.

CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Thank you Chair.

3 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you Chair. Next up  
4 we have Council Member Vicki Paladino for questions.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Good afternoon  
6 everybody and I too want to thank the two Chairs for  
7 doing this very important meeting. I also would like  
8 to say that whenever I hear the word master plan, it  
9 kind of makes me a little nervous. When I think of  
10 master plan, I think it's like a master plan. It's a  
11 plot. This has been put together since January of  
12 2020, correct under the de Blasio Administration,  
13 correct?

14 BRETT SIKOFF: I believe that's right, yes.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Yes, okay, so uh, also  
16 I'd like to understand that \$157 million was allotted  
17 through our city budget correct?

18 BRETT SIKOFF: I believe that's correct, yes.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Okay, we need to know  
20 the budget that's coming down from the federal  
21 government as well as the state government. So, so  
22 far Big Apple, uh, is this like a monopoly? How did  
23 you come about? How does Big Apple decide about and  
24 who is Big Apple?

25 BRETT SIKOFF: Good question. So, Big Apple was  
essentially created by the Big Apple Connect program.

3 It was born out of the Mayor and the CTO's vision  
4 that NYCHA residents in particular but the city in  
5 general, uh, should not be without broadband service.  
6 We recognize the stark disparities in terms of NYCHA  
7 adoption for broadband service and we sought to  
8 utilize our existing relationships with the cable  
9 providers who do have the infrastructure in place  
10 that can quickly turn on and activate service.

11 Like I said earlier, it's not a major  
12 construction project so it's not going to take  
13 multiple years. We just don't have the time for  
14 that. The residents don't have the time for that.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: So, there is no  
16 actually uh, no request for BIDs or anything like  
17 that?

18 BRETT SIKOFF: There were, there was an RFP that  
19 went out to those cable providers.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Okay.

21 BRETT SIKOFF: The primary cable providers in the  
22 city, Spectrum and Verizon Communications. Uhm, so  
23 the three of them responded. We negotiated a  
24 contract grid between us and Charter, us and Altice  
25 and they are currently providing the service and then

1  
2 as much earlier, we continue discussions with  
3 Verizon.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Well, I get a little  
5 nervous in a city of eight million or more people.  
6 NYCHA being key, front ground. This is a terrific  
7 program, but I have to agree with Councilwoman Julie  
8 Menin. When she brought up how well she's done this  
9 on a local level. I doubt huge, huge corporations  
10 are able to handle this unless it's broken down into  
11 a law local level. She quoted earlier, which I had  
12 no idea about and I'd like to talk more to her about  
13 this, that when we bring things down and she's proven  
14 it, that it works. So, when we get lost in all the  
15 weeds here and this city is made up of many, many,  
16 many weeds, we never really get the job done. We see  
17 millions and look like one billion, maybe less, a  
18 little less here or there, I'm all about the bottom  
19 line. I'm all about the numbers and I'm all about  
20 delivering the services to the people.

21 Now, when we talk about things as Julie has  
22 spoken about, I figured I'd think a little bit more  
23 about along those lines. While I want to hold you -  
24 I want to say good job but right now, there's too  
25 many questions to this and for somebody that's been

3 around since 2020, we are now approaching the end of  
4 2022. I think we need a lot of questions answered.  
5 Another thing I'd like to say, this is 30 some odd  
6 pages long that we got; you know when we received  
7 this? Three o'clock yesterday afternoon on a Sunday.  
8 Three o'clock.

9 Now, this is how stuff doesn't get done. Because  
10 when you receive like myself, receive 32 pages, this  
11 is how stuff gets past without anybody knowing  
12 anything. That's not fair. The people have a right  
13 to know what's in these 32 pages and while everybody  
14 up here is doing their due diligence to find out,  
15 we're left with a lot of unanswered questions. I  
16 really suggest and this is a broad suggestion, that  
17 when we tackle something as big as this in the City  
18 of New York, that we do not receive notice at 3:00  
19 p.m. on a Sunday afternoon, so that we could be  
20 prepared for a meeting less than 24 hours later.  
21 This may never happen again. Thank you very much.

22 BRETT SIKOFF: Council Member, may I ask to what  
23 you're referring to? The document?

24 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: I realize that, but I  
25 have to be critical of that. We should never have  
received this just 24 hours ago.

3 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you Council Member.  
4 Uhm, I'm going to pass it up to Council Member  
5 Holden. I just want a follow up question because I  
6 want to uplift the question that she asked about uhm,  
7 the Big Apple Connect and the RFP's. Did I hear you  
8 correct when you said the RFP's were sent out to the  
9 three providers?

10 BRETT SIKOFF: Correct.

11 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, exclusively, only  
12 those three were even able to apply.

13 BRETT SIKOFF: Right and the reason for that is  
14 we wanted to leverage their existing infrastructure  
15 at recognizing and they would be the quickest to be  
16 able to turn on the service, so.

17 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Uhm, and we never saw  
18 those RFP's. Were those RFP's ever made public? Was  
19 the public or is the city aware that there was an RFP  
20 solicitation while this was happening?

21 BRETT SIKOFF: Uhm, I'll have to get back to you.  
22 I don't have the mechanics of having RFP, I believe  
23 it is pursuant to a master service agreement, an  
24 existing master service agreement we have with the  
25 city. We have at those companies, and this is an RFP



3 based off of that, but we can get back to you on  
4 that.

5 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you. Council  
6 Member Holden, you have a question?

7 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Yes, thank you Chairs  
8 again for this important hearing and thank you for  
9 your testimony. Does the uhm, in the cable franchise  
10 agreements, does the city mention limits or do they  
11 set limits on price increases?

12 CHANTAL SENATUS: Unfortunately, Councilman, we  
13 cannot regulate rates for cable service. It's under  
14 the Cable Act, the Federal Cable Act.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: The Federal Cable Act  
16 does not allow us as a city to set price increases.  
17 So, what kind of sitting ducks for some of these  
18 cable companies which have been raising the prices.  
19 So, we can't set any, that's a federal you said -

20 CHANTAL SENATUS: That's correct, the Cable Act  
21 of I believe it's 1984 and it's in those provisions  
22 that they set certain limitations for local entities  
23 with respect to franchises regarding cable.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: So, essentially, those  
25 cable companies could triple their rates and where we  
can't do anything about it as a city?

3 CHANTAL SENATUS: I'm not certain regarding what  
4 other types of controls there may be but definitely  
5 not within the franchise scheme.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: So, the Franchise  
7 Agreement will just say they have to provide a  
8 service right.

9 CHANTAL SENATUS: Well, the Cable Franchises  
10 primarily are about the creation and extension of  
11 infrastructure as we give them the ability to use the  
12 right of way. So, that's the main focus of the  
13 agreement and then -

14 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: And who's checking on the  
15 quality of their service because when it comes to  
16 cable, especially if the cables are exposed or  
17 they're on poles like in most of my district, they  
18 deteriorate to a point where you don't get the  
19 service that you pay for or your paying for. Who is  
20 checking that? Because they're not checking it  
21 themselves. The companies aren't checking it and  
22 many times when I call about you know, I'm not  
23 getting the speed, I'm not getting the service. I'm  
24 getting you know frozen T.V.

25 Oh, that's because this pole or this needs to be  
upgraded and every time I do that, it needs to be

1  
2 upgraded they say, so they try it and then it lost a  
3 couple of months and then it goes back again and  
4 then, I'm living with that.

5 So, we're all - you know, obviously the city is  
6 not checking it right? On the agreement that says  
7 you have to provide this and maintain your  
8 infrastructure right?

9 CHANTAL SENATUS: I mean, we do have the ability  
10 to gauge uhm, public concern and community concerns  
11 and interests overall with respect to as part of  
12 renewing a cable franchise but on a day-to-day scale,  
13 I'm not aware of who is actually doing that.

14 BRETT SICKOFF: Ultimately the carriers, the  
15 franchisee's themselves are responsible for that. I  
16 would point out that power, legal authority extends  
17 to just cable T.V. provisioning. So, where they also  
18 provide broadband services, that is not under the  
19 city's jurisdiction.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Yeah, but again, there's  
21 no oversight as to you know, are they providing what  
22 they promised you know? That's where we need some  
23 kind of oversight from the city, I would say, right?

24 BRETT SIKOFF: So, our cable television franchise  
25 unit regulates the cable portion of those companies

3 and we do periodically receive complaints from  
4 individual members of the public regarding their  
5 cable service.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: But there's no spot  
7 check. Like, let's see what we're getting here.  
8 Let's see how well your infrastructure is maintained.  
9 But let me get to another, you know on my Intro. 112,  
10 do you have any issues with the bill you know the way  
11 it's currently written?

12 BRETT SIKOFF: Yeah, and I heard at the onset a  
13 little bit more about what you're thinking in terms  
14 of the bill. What I would note is and you referenced  
15 this earlier, we do have our franchise agreements  
16 posted on our website.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: I know but -

18 BRETT SIKOFF: We're going to continue to expand  
19 those.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: You have the agreements,  
21 but you don't have the older ones, which I think we  
22 could compare it if we had the older ones on there  
23 too.

24 BRETT SIKOFF: Sure, we could look at putting  
25 archive.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Yeah, because I really  
4 would like to know you know but I'd like it  
5 summarized. I don't want to go through you know, I  
6 don't think anybody has the time to go through 50, 75  
7 pages. I would like it broken down. I think that  
8 would be a wonderful thing to have a website and we  
9 can compare, and we could say oh, this is what this  
10 one's providing. This is what that's providing, and  
11 this is what this one's providing.

12 This way we can compare very easily and again, to  
13 the person, not somebody who is you know a contract a  
14 lawyer and have to go through this and comb through.  
15 Because we've tried, myself tried and we couldn't  
16 find things. You know we have to search and search,  
17 nobody's going to do that.

18 So, I think that's where you guys come in, break  
19 it down, make a chart, let's compare the contracts  
20 and I think that's on a website that we could look at  
21 in a glance.

22 BRET SIKOFF: Let us take that back.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Oh, thank you. Thanks so  
24 much.

25 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: I just want to piggyback off  
of Council Member Holden. So, the city doesn't have

3 any infrastructure to kind of see what the service  
4 providers are, if they're actually providing what  
5 they're saying providing. Because I know for one, in  
6 my community in Northeast Bronx, I know the majority  
7 of the members in Co-op City have Optimum and they  
8 haven't been very pleased with the services that  
9 they're offering, especially in my area when it comes  
10 to broadband services, it has been a weak signal for  
11 the last two years.

12 And when I'm calling Optimum myself or Altice,  
13 excuse me myself, they are assuring that this is  
14 happening. They're not really giving me any reason  
15 why this happened, so do we have any power as a city  
16 or any jurisdiction to kind of see if they're  
17 providing the services that they're saying they're  
18 providing. If not, I think we should figure out a  
19 way that we can kind of give some oversight over  
20 this. Because if we only have three providers, then  
21 we don't really have much you know options and  
22 they're charging us a very healthy you know way, so.

23 BRETT SIKOFF: Thank you Chair Riley. So, all of  
24 our cable franchises are required to provide the  
25 services that they're contractually required to under  
their franchise agreement to the citizens. To the

3 extent that they're not or the service is down,  
4 obviously they have an incentive to ensure that the  
5 infrastructure is improved. I mentioned earlier that  
6 at least one of the cable companies is converting  
7 their coax to legacy copper service to fiber and  
8 upgrading the services, which we should see  
9 improvement in service there, but this really goes  
10 back to competition. If there's just a single  
11 provider in a borough or at a particular location  
12 like Co-op City, having an alternative to the legacy  
13 cable provider is key to keeping them on their toes  
14 and giving people options.

15 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you Chair Riley. I  
16 have a question about uhm, the developments that are  
17 currently a part of Big Apple Connect and with the  
18 understanding that it's going to continue to grow and  
19 that there's other developments. Can you talk to any  
20 of these buildings because these are not all in my  
21 district, about any of these current or that you're  
22 looking to expand in being part of RAD or PACT, which  
23 is the city's process for a 99-year lease. The  
24 developments will no longer be under NYCHA  
25 management. Can you speak to a little bit about what  
those conversations, what those decisions are to

3 include those developments into the Big Apple Connect  
4 and how has communication changed because you are no  
5 longer working with NYCHA to for example, designate  
6 Wi-Fi hotspots. You're now working with a management  
7 company and a developer. So, if you can speak to  
8 those examples.

9 BRETT SIKOFF: Yeah, thank you Chair Gutiérrez.  
10 So, with respect to this initial announcement today  
11 for the 127 developments, I don't believe any of them  
12 are the RAD PACT developments. So, as you  
13 acknowledge that they are not managed by NYCHA  
14 directly, managed by third parties. So, we'll have  
15 to take a look to see how those can possibly be  
16 developed into the program. But because of that  
17 complexity, because they are not managed by NYCHA,  
18 those were not in this initial round. So, we'll go  
19 back with NYCHA and see if there's opportunities.

20 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: So, your total numbers, I  
21 don't know if they were part of your opening  
22 testimony but about connecting NYCHA residents. Do  
23 those include tenants that are part of the RAD and  
24 the PACT program or just the 127 developments.

25 BRETT SIKOFF: Just the ones that were announced  
today, the 127.



3 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, and can you speak  
4 to what are the conversations? Because every  
5 development has a different management company, so it  
6 is a rather I assume a complicated process. How are  
7 you all engaging with those management companies in  
8 those developments?

9 BRETT SIKOFF: Well, the ones that are part of  
10 Big Apple Connect.

11 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: No, the ones just in RAD.

12 BRETT SIKOFF: Oh, I'm sorry. So, the ones that  
13 are in RAD and PACT were not included in that. So,  
14 we haven't had that dialogue. That's especially for  
15 NYCHA to have with their managing partners. So, we  
16 haven't had that conversation. So, we're focused  
17 solely for now on the developments that are managed  
18 by NYCHA.

19 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: But for the developments  
20 that are not part of Big Apple Connect that are maybe  
21 covered under RFEI's. Will those include  
22 developments of part of RAD?

23 BRETT SIKOFF: I'll have to get back to you. I  
24 don't believe they are part of RAD. So, the ones  
25 that are being serviced by an RFEI vendor today,

3 fairly certain that those are not part of RAD. That  
4 they are just NYCHA managed.

5 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, uhm, I'm concerned  
6 in my district, Hope Gardens is one of those RAD  
7 developments that are also served by Optimum. Same  
8 concerns shared with Council Member Riley here. Uhm,  
9 I understand that it's probably just the easier lift  
10 to work with NYCHA in these instances, but these are  
11 folks that in many instances, tenants did not ask to  
12 be converted into RAD uhm, are kind of being strung  
13 along in this like process and I think are probably  
14 just, even probably more vulnerable and do need  
15 access to connectivity.

16 And I'm also concerned, if I'm hearing what you  
17 said correctly, that you're really leaving in those  
18 instances the conversation to be had between NYCHA  
19 and those particular management companies. Has  
20 anyone known NYCHA to be great communicators? I'm  
21 concerned that that is the strategy.

22 I'm going to pass it next to Council Member Won  
23 for follow-up questions.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: I have a few follow-up  
25 questions about the two bills but before I start on  
that, I had a question on, in regards of the monopoly

3 that people are asking about. So, when we're doing  
4 registrations or for Big Apple Connect the idea is  
5 that one provider will be contracted an entire NYCHA  
6 unit like Queens Bridge Houses or Woodside Houses,  
7 then what do you foresee as a mitigation strategy  
8 that OTI will be doing to make sure that in three  
9 years from now other providers, smaller ones that  
10 were there for example RCN, that they are not starved  
11 out and they are eliminated from the competition, so  
12 that if in the case three years from now, Big Apple  
13 Connect is not renewed that our residents still have  
14 options for their internet service providers?

15 BRETT SIKOFF: Yeah, thank you Council Member  
16 Won. So, that's a good question. We do hope and tie  
17 it back to competition and expanding the market  
18 place. We do hope that there are multiple providers  
19 that over the next two, three years, one to three  
20 years, we expect that there will be additional  
21 providers to choose from rather than just going to  
22 the stand alone, the cable company right.

23 So, our expectation is that we'll continue to  
24 grow the market and give people choice.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Can you just clarify that  
even though right now; Altice or Optimum has

1  
2 Brooklyn, and the Bronx contract and Spectrum has the  
3 Queens contract, but the idea is not to have these  
4 providers have contracts for the entire borough of  
5 NYCHA's but each NYCHA in the boroughs can have  
6 different contracts with different providers.

7 BRETT SIKOFF: Just so I understand you clear.  
8 You're saying because as we all know Altice is you  
9 know two-thirds of Brooklyn, the entire Bronx,  
10 Charter the remaining boroughs, uhm, so they were  
11 given as part of their contract the service area that  
12 they already cover. They would give me the ability  
13 to build out to those NYCHA - or provide the service  
14 to those NYCHA developments within the borough that  
15 we designated and announced today. Are you asking  
16 for anything beyond those?

17 Because see, Altice wouldn't provide service to a  
18 Charter territory. They just don't have the  
19 infrastructure in place for that.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Okay, so what you're saying  
21 is that you are opting to contract with the provider  
22 that is most prominent in that NYCHA unit, correct?

23 BRETT SIKOFF: Yeah, so there would be two  
24 providers. It would be Altice and their territory is  
25 Charter and their service area is in some cases

3 Verizon, as about 90 plus percent of the city. So,  
4 they would be the secondary, but Altice and Charter  
5 wouldn't compete. They just don't have overlapping  
6 territories.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Okay. Thank you, that  
8 helps. For Intro. 440, what implications do you  
9 anticipate in adopting the idea and do you have any  
10 questions and if you have any issues with the bill  
11 currently written, what are your issues?

12 BRETT SIKOFF: So, 440 with the wireless service.  
13 We do have questions and we'd love to follow up with  
14 your office offline but initially clearly, there are  
15 significant operational and fiscal considerations  
16 that we must analyze given something at this scale  
17 and Council can also concur that security  
18 implications as well. So, those are our primary  
19 concerns, but we would like to hear more about what  
20 you would vision, how this would work, who it would  
21 be open to. Uhm, would it be a managed access  
22 network, managed by the city or third party, those  
23 types of things.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Okay, we'll definitely  
25 follow up but just to summarize, for example, a  
public school or a public library or public hospital,

1  
2 there are inconsistencies in accessibility to their  
3 Wi-Fi network. Even if they have a public Wi-Fi  
4 network that can be used, and it's paid on taxpayer  
5 dollars. If I walk into certain hospitals, some  
6 hospitals will allow me to use their internet and  
7 some won't. And then you have public, other public  
8 spaces that have internet access but do not allow  
9 public usage either.

10 So, we'll follow-up and then for 599, do you  
11 believe that DoITT has staffing and resources  
12 necessary to carry out the goals of this legislation  
13 and do you currently have any issues with this bill?

14 BRETT SIKOFF: I wouldn't say we have issues but  
15 it's something we would have to discuss with DOE to  
16 determine you know what they believe the need to be  
17 is with the feedback they've been getting from, from  
18 students and their families in terms of the at home  
19 needs and we can continue that dialogue.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Yeah, one more bill also on  
21 regarding 311 providing information on the ACP, Big  
22 Apple Connect and others because what we're seeing is  
23 that we now have a state program, a federal program  
24 and a city program to provide free internet to our  
25 residents in New York City. Yet, what is missing or

1  
2 the desinence that we have is the understanding or  
3 awareness of the programs on how to sign up for them.

4 So, I would love to hear if you have a strategy  
5 overall at OTI on how you're going to raise awareness  
6 to make sure that our residents, especially the most  
7 vulnerable are getting connected while they already  
8 have the ability to.

9 BRETT SIKOFF: Yeah, certainly we agree that the  
10 more information the better. The families make the  
11 decisions that are best for them. And I do know, and  
12 I mentioned this earlier, we have provided  
13 information on ACP through backpack letters that were  
14 sent home with students over the at least the year or  
15 year and a half and we can look at ways to continue  
16 to do that.

17 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you Council Member  
18 Won. Next up Council Member Brewer.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you. Just speaking  
20 up on NYCHA, are you going to do some kind of a  
21 survey for those that are using any of these  
22 programs, to see if they are effective? Just because  
23 I've been hearing the same NYCHA story for 30 years,  
24 right. So, I'm just wondering, are you going to do  
25 any kind of an evaluation or assessment?

3 BRETT SIKOFF: Yeah, we can do - we can certainly  
4 do a more formal assessment -

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: A formal.

6 BRETT SIKOFF: As we get, you know as we're on  
7 the ground in a very grassroots kind of outreach  
8 campaign speaking with the community, with the tenant  
9 association presidents, we want to know what works  
10 and what doesn't and that's part of the really, the  
11 master assessment.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Yeah, but will an outside  
13 evaluator from CUNY for instance do that work?

14 BRETT SIKOFF: It's a good suggestion. We can  
15 take a look at that.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay because I would  
17 really like to see that. With all due respect, I've  
18 heard it before. I don't know that any of these  
19 programs are going to work. I have to be honest with  
20 you.

21 BRETT SIKOFF: I agree.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, number two is 311.  
23 You heard from Council Member Won. I'm also  
24 suggesting 311 not only provide information but I'm  
25 suggesting and I'm putting this in a bill that it  
provide training. That we have an outside group



3 because this is great to set up all of this. Who's  
4 training people how to use the services? Are you  
5 doing that? No. So, my question is, you need, if  
6 we're going to be a society that knows how to use  
7 internet for education and jobs etc., I need  
8 training.

9 So, I have some suggestions for that, but I just  
10 want to let you know, you got to use more than  
11 putting hardware in somebodies. And then along those  
12 lines Verizon. I don't care - I don't even know what  
13 that Bronx group is, Altice, I've never heard of them  
14 except from other places because they are not in  
15 Manhattan. Spectrum and Verizon are. Neither one of  
16 them are great. They are all terrible to be honest  
17 with you. So, the question is, some residence  
18 prefer, I have both. They're all terrible but the  
19 question is with Verizon, residents prefer them. So,  
20 you're only talking about two companies and you're  
21 not including Verizon because they're the toughest  
22 negotiators. Are they going to be part of this  
23 program or not because residents want Verizon, I'll  
24 tell you. I want Spectrum because I like Era Louis  
25 but for Verizon. Right, I am perfectly clear, right  
into the microphone. Spectrum, Era Louis and I say

3 to Verizon, you don't have Era Louis, so too bad,  
4 you're terrible.

5 So, the question is, but the residents want  
6 Verizon. So, is it going to be part of this program?  
7 I mean, are you just going to say maybe, maybe for  
8 the future.

9 CHANTAL SENATUS: Well, we're still in the midst  
10 of negotiations right now and we have to consider the  
11 fact that you know there is a cost associated with  
12 each of these transactions. So, it's a balance  
13 between what the city needs and wants to pay for and  
14 also what services we can get and how much Verizon is  
15 loved by all.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, I'm just telling,  
17 those residents - the only thing is, at some point,  
18 somebody doesn't pay their bill. In the past,  
19 Spectrum would cut them off from any program. This  
20 is not the first program for NYCHA, just in case you  
21 didn't know. This has been going on for years. This  
22 one, that one, the next one. So, is that going to be  
23 an issue? In other words, will there be a situation  
24 where somebody doesn't pay any bill at all or is that  
25 not relevant because everything is free?

3 BRETT SIKOFF: So, the city is billed directly  
4 for the services. So, if you subscribe to just the  
5 internet and the basic cable T.V. service, you'll get  
6 as a resident, you'll get a bill that says you're on  
7 it.

8 To the extent that you enhance your services, you  
9 get HBO and other you know premium services, you will  
10 get a bill for that incremental portion.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, if you don't pay  
12 that, you'll still be able to keep the program that  
13 you're suggesting, the Big Apple Connect?

14 BRETT SIKOFF: That's correct, yeah.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: That's going to be a  
16 problem. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you Council Member  
18 Brewer. I have a couple of follow up questions.  
19 Just to uplift Council Member Won's questions about  
20 the funding and the specificity of it. Can you  
21 please share with us how much of the projected cost  
22 is coming from locations made from the previous year.  
23 I know you did share with us that the initial capital  
24 allocation from FY 2021 is untouched, which I think  
25 is \$157 million. Can you please just specify the  
current cost? Where it's coming from? If it's

3 coming from federal dollars, state dollars, uhm, I  
4 just would love to have you share that.

5 BRETT SIKOFF: Yeah, my understanding is that the  
6 cost of the program is being paid by a budget line  
7 that is to be established by OMB. So, there will be  
8 a budget allocation for it, so that hasn't been  
9 finalized as my understanding and just to clarify, on  
10 the master plan, I believe that money, the \$157  
11 million is being held at EDC. It was always under an  
12 EDC budget line but with respect to how Big Apple  
13 gets paid, Big Apple Connect, that's yet to be  
14 determined in terms of how like the funding source  
15 and that gets worked out with OMB.

16 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: But if it started just  
17 last month or two months ago, how is that being paid  
18 for?

19 BRETT SIKOFF: So, OTI, we get invoiced, they  
20 send the bills to OTI and OTI through its normal  
21 invoice paying system would pay those bills. As the  
22 program gets expanded, we're going to work with OMB  
23 to designate a funding source.

24 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Sure, and uhm, my next  
25 question, it depends a little bit on the amount of  
26 outreach and engagement that OTI has made. What is

3 the projected cost in these developments because it  
4 sounds to me that it depends on how many units sign  
5 up right. And again, to Council Member Menin's  
6 point, you're really doubling down, you're really  
7 duplicating something that already exists. I think  
8 it's ironic the agency is trying to avoid duplication  
9 by holding off on the master plan by putting this new  
10 initiative together, but it sounds like it already  
11 exists. So, I just want to have a sense of kind of  
12 where that it is because it doesn't make a whole -  
13 it's not very clear to me on that piece.

14 BRETT SIKOFF: Yeah, so the estimates are again,  
15 it's completely dependent on how many people sign up  
16 for the program and how many people - when the cable  
17 companies start billing OTI for it. But it maybe in  
18 the neighborhood of around \$30 million per year to  
19 support the program.

20 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: I'm sorry, say that  
21 again.

22 BRETT SIKOFF: It may be in the neighborhood of  
23 around \$30 million per year.

24 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: And will we expect the  
25 same process every year of waiting for OMB's line  
item in that, of that outyear budget to be able to

3 understand how much the project – how much the cost  
4 is?

5 BRETT SIKOFF: No, I think that'll be established  
6 but this is at the very beginning stages of it, so  
7 it's more of an administrative task than anything.

8 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, my next question is  
9 regarding Intro. 241. In your opening statement, you  
10 mentioned that to your knowledge, all students likely  
11 have access to hotspots and internet access. I  
12 cannot confirm if that's true. The DOE hearing, it  
13 was still very kind of messy, what the DOE's response  
14 was. We had that earlier in this year when all the  
15 hearings were COVID related. So, I just want to give  
16 that back to you that we don't know if that's real  
17 still and we're in September.

18 But I also just want to uplift the fact that last  
19 year, last week the Chancellor made an announcement  
20 about no more snow days. Every student will be  
21 expected to sign on remotely and that is a concern of  
22 mine. If we are not equipping families, if we are  
23 not equipping students with the appropriate device  
24 and you saying that I think they're supposed to have  
25 it. I can tell you for a fact, that either a.  
parents don't even know about it and the amount of

3 families in our districts are now taking because of  
4 what's going on at the border. There is no guarantee  
5 that these families will be equipped with hotspots or  
6 to Council Member Brewer's point, will even have the  
7 capacity to understand how that all works.

8 So, besides that, what is the key issue of that  
9 bill? Because I think it is key that we codify this  
10 piece. That we cannot wait independent on the DOE to  
11 kind of figure it out on their own. So, are there  
12 other concerns that you all have with this bill?

13 BRETT SIKOFF: Obviously, you know like providing  
14 access and giving people the tools, they need to  
15 compete in school and work and all that is essential  
16 to what we do but ultimately that really is a DOE  
17 call in terms of how they communicate this to the  
18 families, to the students and their families and what  
19 feedback they're getting.

20 So, we'll continue to support them as necessary  
21 but it just really, it's something I think DO- is  
22 better poised to answer.

23 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, I think next we  
24 have Council Member Holden.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Yeah, just a quick  
question and observation. On the cable agreements,

3 last time around, about four years ago; I want to  
4 talk about Verizon because they were mentioned in a  
5 positive light, but Verizon did four years ago,  
6 eliminate support for the copper wire. That's the  
7 old phone lines, which many seniors use even today.  
8 They were using it. So, when a franchisee cancels a  
9 service, they should be able to – there should be  
10 something in the contract that prohibits them or has  
11 them notify customers in writing.

12 Here's what happened and we had a hearing on  
13 this. Four years ago, you know like I said, Verizon  
14 decided to not support copper wire anymore.  
15 Everybody had to get the phones through their cable,  
16 or you know their Wi-Fi, so they called some  
17 customers. Now, they called my mom, who had, she had  
18 the old-fashioned phone and the button phone, but it  
19 was on the pole, the wire, the copper wire and it was  
20 very reliable. They decided, Verizon eliminated that  
21 but never sent out a notice in writing to the  
22 customers.

23 Now, when you call seniors, by the way, and you  
24 call somebody you know in their 90's and you're  
25 asking them to do something, they're not going to  
listen to you usually. They're going to hang up,



3 which I directed my mom to do. Anytime somebody  
4 calls wanting something, hang up because it's  
5 unsolicited and we don't want that. We don't want  
6 seniors to get you know fooled and give out wrong  
7 information or information that's sensitive. Verizon  
8 didn't and I brought this up at the hearing, Verizon  
9 still did not make good on notifying customers that  
10 they were eliminating service. So, what happens? My  
11 mothers phone was cut off and I didn't know it  
12 because I lived in the same house, so I didn't know  
13 that she was cut off for a month and a half. And  
14 nobody could reach her. My siblings finally said,  
15 you know I can't reach mom.

16 That's how we knew that they closed. So, it  
17 needs to be you know, there needs to be language in  
18 these agreements that you have to notify customers if  
19 you're eliminating a service on them, in writing.  
20 You know whether it's in their bill, but it has to be  
21 done in a separate mailing. So, I will just caution  
22 you on that. Thank you.

23 CHANTAL SENATUS: Thank you very much. I believe  
24 that there are consumer protection provisions in the  
25 Cable Franchise Agreements now, but I'll double check  
with respect to the notification provision.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Well, they did the same  
4 thing to senior centers by the way, because Tish  
5 James was at the hearing when she Public Advocate,  
6 that's when this happened and she said, that was  
7 going on throughout the City of New York but yet,  
8 nobody did anything, and they weren't made to make  
9 good on notifying anyone. So, that again, that needs  
10 to be in the language of these agreements. Thanks.

11 CHANTAL SENATUS: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you. Next, we have  
13 Council Member Julie Menin.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Thank you so much. I  
15 really want to build upon what Chair Gutiérrez asked.  
16 So, you're spending \$30 million on this program on  
17 Big Apple Connect. Why are you doing that when  
18 there's an alternative that is free? And did the  
19 city survey what other cities are doing, as to  
20 whether or not they were fully using an ACP plan that  
21 pairs with the low-cost alternative and not putting  
22 in municipal funds?

23 BRETT SIKOFF: Yeah, thanks. I don't know that  
24 that we've surveyed other cities in that regard.  
25 However, you know just to bring it back to what we  
talked about, this is all about giving residents of

3 NYCHA and potentially other residents throughout the  
4 city expanded access to or accelerated access, I  
5 should say, to broadband services.

6 Yes, ACP is available, it's a great program. We  
7 internally may have some questions about the  
8 longevity aspect of it but the fact that we can add  
9 cable T.V. to it and have them apply it to their  
10 cellphone plan, you know it's almost a logical  
11 solution to be able to give them the broadband  
12 service and give them the savings on their cellphone  
13 plan and give them the choice. It's really about  
14 doing that.

15 So, if a resident you know likes their existing  
16 service and wants to keep the ACP benefit, they don't  
17 have to enroll in Big Apple Connect. They can opt  
18 out of it but otherwise, it's made available to  
19 everybody. It goes to the center of where we have  
20 adoption issues where folks who are just not signing  
21 up for service for whatever reason or ability or  
22 awareness and we are able to control that process.  
23 We are able to go into the developments, sign people  
24 up and ensure that they are -

25 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: So, what I feel is my  
office did survey other cities. We actually reached

3 out to all major other cities to understand what they  
4 were doing before we put our plan together. I am not  
5 aware of other cities that are doing anything like  
6 this. They are basically using the federal funds  
7 that are available through ACP. So, again, I just  
8 want to express my strong reservations on this and  
9 why we're spending \$30 million on this. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Per year. Thank you  
11 Council Member Menin. I have a question and then  
12 we're going to pass it to Council Member Won.

13 What is the agencies plan for a website dedicated  
14 to the internet master plan? I know there's a PDF  
15 that exists. I think everything that we shared here  
16 today is vital but the irony of this hearing about  
17 internet connectivity is up. It's possible folks  
18 wouldn't even be able to join us virtually even if  
19 they wanted to because of their lack of connectivity.  
20 So, when can you tell us or what can you share with  
21 us about making updates to the master plan, even if  
22 it's just conversations available to New Yorkers?

23 Like I shared in my testimony, there were a ton  
24 of advocates that were really in support of a master  
25 plan finally existing for the city and as it stands  
right now, they are left with very little information

3 in kind of 24-hour notice about an announcement  
4 regarding Big Apple Connectivity. And if that  
5 website could also potentially include notifications  
6 and updates about how you are all engaging with these  
7 MWBE's, I would love to know who are the MWBE's that  
8 you are engaging with that have applied. I don't  
9 believe that we have gotten that. I know you are  
10 going to get back to us, but I think it's crucial  
11 that when we have an administration that is saying,  
12 like yeah, we care about MWBE's and also be  
13 transparent about who they are. There could MWBE's  
14 in our backyard that want to be connected. And I  
15 just, I need to understand from you all how that  
16 outreach looks, and I think that needs to start with  
17 the website. So, can you share any information about  
18 what that plan looks like and how much information  
19 you will all be posting to that internet master plan  
20 website?

21 BRET SIKOFF: Yeah, in the spirit of  
22 transparency, we can create a website and provide  
23 that information, but I think the first step is that  
24 kind of holistic analysis of the entire landscape of  
25 broadband services. How the internet master plan  
plays into that. How it can maybe be modified to

3 surgically and target areas that are needed most.

4 And we can make that information available as it  
5 develops.

6 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: I think also it should  
7 include these new initiatives. I know you shared  
8 that you're having conversations, not a lot of detail  
9 that you shared about what these other initiatives  
10 are; I'm dying to know what they are and what they  
11 look like, but I think we need to start there. The  
12 website needs to include that. I'm going to pass it  
13 to Council Member Won.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: My last question today is  
15 about customer satisfaction. I want to make sure  
16 that there is some sort of feedback loop put in place  
17 for all of the contract providers for Spectrum as  
18 well as Altice and then Verizon in the future,  
19 because we know over and over again, as we're hearing  
20 from our colleagues all throughout the city, the  
21 current providers even without Big Apple Connect are  
22 having connectivity issues maintenance issues, and  
23 pure negligence especially in the NYCHA's when it  
24 comes to repairs and being timely for when systems  
25 are down.

3 And I just also want to raise in addition to  
4 Altice having the overcharging violation for our  
5 franchise agreements, that Spectrum or Charter  
6 Communications has also been under scrutiny for union  
7 busting as well, which also goes into the issue about  
8 pricing. We do know that every ISP has its flaws,  
9 especially the large corporations but we do know that  
10 Verizon does have a very strong union presence, which  
11 leads to higher prices. So, I'm just wondering how  
12 the contracts are going to be negotiated. With that  
13 in mind, knowing that some of the providers can  
14 provide cheaper pricing because they are not allowing  
15 their employees to unionize.

16 CHANTAL SENATUS: For each contract, we do take  
17 into consideration like the landscape that exists.  
18 So, I'm certain that it will be taken into account  
19 with respect to the negotiations that will take place  
20 with Charter, Altice, and with Verizon when the time  
21 comes. And also, just with respect to your concern  
22 about uhm, more customer satisfaction information in  
23 the contracts that you receive with respect to both  
24 Altice and Charter, there are provisions in there,  
25 like a service level agreement, which indicates like  
a minimum threshold for customer services.

3 So, you'll see there that there are standards  
4 available, and we'll capitalize on those standards in  
5 the future.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Are there currently metrics  
7 in place for adoption standards to see how high the  
8 adoption rate is per NYCHA for these pilot locations,  
9 as well as customer satisfaction, to ensure that the  
10 programs will be successful?

11 BRETT SIKOFF: Yeah, so, certainly our goal is  
12 100 percent right. We want to get everybody who is  
13 eligible to sign up as quickly as possible. So, part  
14 of the pilot was to analyze how quickly folks were  
15 signing up, what the interest was, what their  
16 hesitancy was and really understand what the root  
17 cause of that was before we expanded to the 127, now  
18 127 developments.

19 So, we're going to continue to do that. Like I  
20 said, we're going to have folks on the ground and  
21 we're communicating with the tenant association  
22 presidents, and we'll better assess how it's being  
23 received by the public and if there's any concerns,  
24 we'll adjust accordingly.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Could you also clarify the  
\$30 million per year in spending is for the pilot



3 programs right now or for the expected cost for  
4 citywide for every single NYCHA?

5 BRETT SIKOFF: Yeah, so just to clarify and I do  
6 want to correct something on the record. The number  
7 that I provided, that dollar figure, it's still part  
8 of the ongoing evaluation in terms of how it's going  
9 to get paid, it's not a line item.

10 So, as we deploy this program, as folks sign up,  
11 we'll continue to evaluate the cost and the  
12 effectiveness of it holistically. You know in terms  
13 of not just the operations of it but the finances of  
14 it.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Okay, so \$30 million is not  
16 just for the pilot programs but it's for citywide?

17 BRETT SIKOFF: Again, that's tied to the \$30  
18 million but in terms of the 127 developments that  
19 were announced today and any additional developments  
20 that may come in thereafter, that's just kind of the  
21 ballpark that we're talking.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER WON: Okay, thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Before we go into  
24 testimony, I just have one more follow-up. So, and  
25 this is Council Member Won alluded to this earlier,  
26 so any of the funding from the American Rescue Plan

3 Act and the connectivity fund, can you share with us  
4 how that money is being utilize? Just so that we're  
5 clear of those funds that exist either federally or  
6 statewide? How is the agency using them to further;  
7 not specifically for Big Apple Connect but just in  
8 general. How are those funds being utilized? What  
9 is the plan for them? Are there conversations about  
10 these funds being utilized for the internet master  
11 plan use? I think it's important for us to just know  
12 like, we need long term goals. We're not, obviously  
13 we're not ready to share with those, how we're going  
14 to execute them but how are these funds coming into  
15 play?

16 BRETT SIKOFF: Yeah, so I don't have information  
17 available on that. We'd have to get back to you but  
18 that's probably better directed at OMB to you know,  
19 just how federal funds and state funds maybe  
20 allocated. But yeah, so, we can get back to you on  
21 that.

22 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, thank you. I think  
23 I'm going to pass it off Irene now and I also hope  
24 that you can stay. Our advocates have been waiting  
25 for a long time virtually and here in person to  
testify, so I hope that you can stick around.

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Chair and thank you  
4 very much for testimony. We have concluded testimony  
5 from the Administration and now we'll turn to public  
6 testimony and to accommodate everyone, we ask our  
7 witnesses to limit their testimony to three minutes.  
8 And our first panelist will be Stuart Reid and  
9 Patrick Joseph. Mr. Reid?

10 STUART REID: Yes.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: You may begin when you're  
12 ready Co-Chairman of the Smart Community Initiative  
13 Inc, TSCI.

14 STUART REID: Okay. Good afternoon, members of  
15 the New York City Council Technology Committee. All  
16 elected officials present and attending virtually,  
17 and guests. Thank you for giving me the opportunity  
18 to speak about Broadband and Equal Internet Access in  
19 New York City.

20 My name is Stuart Reid, I'm the. TSCI is a 501c3  
21 not-for-profit partnership of public housing resident  
22 leaders and veteran New York City based community  
23 technologists who have come together to help improve  
24 the quality of life of our residents.

3 The members of the board of TSCI are: Ms. Ethel  
4 Velez, TSCI Co-Chair. She is the NYCHA and Manhattan  
5 North District Council of Presidents Chair and  
6 President of James Weldon and Johnson Houses. G.  
7 Douglas Frazier, TSCI Chief Innovator and Founder,  
8 Chairman and Executive Managing Partner, Digital  
9 Divide Partners. Nathaniel Green, Vice Chair, NYCHA  
10 Manhattan North District Council of Presidents and  
11 President of Dyckman Houses Resident Association.  
12 Carlton Davis, Previous Recording Secretary NYCHA  
13 Manhattan North District Council of Presidents and  
14 previous President of Grant Houses Resident  
15 Association. Steve Burke, Digital Divide Partners,  
16 Dr. Kofi Boateng, CPA and Former Executive Director  
17 of the West Harlem Development Corp and myself.

18 Ethel Velez in her capacity as Co-Chair of the  
19 Smart Community Initiative introduces TSCI as  
20 follows: Over the last seven years, I have worked  
21 with the digital divide partnership, a local  
22 community technology group led by Douglas Frazier and  
23 Stuart Reid, to utilize broadband technology to help  
24 improve our communities. Frazer and Reid's work,  
25 goes back to the early 1990's, when they were the  
first minority led group to acquire and develop a

3 fiber based citywide broadband franchise. When most  
4 people never even heard of the internet.

5 The smart community initiatives purpose is to  
6 create a self-contained technological ecosystem that  
7 uses technology to address our problems and  
8 challenges, including increasing and improving our  
9 knowledge, self-reliance, public safety, and quality  
10 of life in our public housing communities. While our  
11 technology partners have been providing both fiber  
12 based to a wireless, low cost and free broadband  
13 applications, services and access in Harlem and the  
14 South Bronx for almost two decades. The Smart  
15 Community Initiative had been providing wireless  
16 broadband services and applications to three public  
17 housing communities in East, Central and West Harlem  
18 since early 2020.

19 In 2021, TSCI was certified in the FCC's  
20 emergency broadband benefit program, now the  
21 Affordability Connectivity Program or ACP. We  
22 believe that TSCI may be the only resident led  
23 internet service provider to be certified by the  
24 federal governments ACP program.

25 Can I conclude? Okay. I've got so much here to  
testify about, and I hope that the Council Members

3 will actually read the testimony but just in  
4 conclusion, uh, as a resident managed not-for-profit  
5 certified by the federal government to provide ACP  
6 service, TCI is uniquely qualified experience and  
7 committed to continuous work bringing free broadband  
8 applications and services to our public housing  
9 communities.

10 We ask that the City Council do whatever is  
11 within its powers to help ensure funding that will  
12 enable the expansion and continue success of our  
13 efforts. Thank you. And by the way, we want a  
14 little small ISP's that was selected in the city RFP.

15 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Can you, oh, I'm so glad  
16 that you are here. I was actually going to ask you  
17 Mr. Reid and I will read your testimony. Can you  
18 tell us a little bit about what the application  
19 process was like? I'm very curious. They did not  
20 share a lot of information.

21 STUART REID: It was grueling. It was a formal  
22 application process. They broke it down in the  
23 three-word screens. Actual building of a technology,  
24 operate in the technology and then providing services  
25 to the users. We applied for all three saying we had  
a holistic approach to provide service to the

3 residents. We have experienced building networks,  
4 operating networks that were providing service and  
5 our whole plan was to – is to train residents. We've  
6 been doing it already for years but to train  
7 residents to actually install and operate the  
8 networks. And we thought that was really unique and  
9 important.

10 One of the things that we've learned is that  
11 residents need to have control of ownership in the  
12 technology in their communities. So often outsiders  
13 have come in making all kinds of promises and we know  
14 where that leads, empty promises. It helps their  
15 bottom line but at the end of the day, it does not  
16 help residents. So, in addition to the training  
17 component, which is extensive, we believe that the  
18 application and services on the broadband are really  
19 the driver because just dropping the broadband off  
20 for folks who don't have any experience using it, is  
21 like that's the reason that broadband adoption is so  
22 low in public housing in many of our low-income  
23 communities.

24 So, we have developed with residents applications  
25 and services that they help us develop that speak to  
their needs. Speak to their needs about public

2 safety. We have a broadband walkie talkie services  
3 where residents are reporting daily on what's going  
4 on in their buildings with the heat, with the hot  
5 water and with the elevators. Vital services in  
6 every public housing development. We create a  
7 public, rather a community-based radio stations in  
8 public housing developments where residents can come  
9 and tell their stories, have conversations, invite in  
10 experts. All this running over the free Wi-Fi  
11 network.

12 So, we talked about all this stuff with the city.  
13 We laid it out. They loved it. One of the other  
14 things we also have sensors, where residents are able  
15 to monitor temperature, heat and humidity and air  
16 quality in their developments over the Wi-Fi network.

17 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Amazing.

18 STUART REID: So, we're teaching the residents to  
19 put those in and to monitor them and figure out what  
20 they need and to report on that. So, again, the  
21 applications and services we believe, are maybe even  
22 more important than the underlying service. Got to  
23 have underlying service but what do you do with it?  
24 How do residents use it? How do they use it to



2 empower and improve their lives and that's what we  
3 believe the real magic is in all of this.

4 So, we applied to the city, we went through the  
5 RFP process. We went through a grueling many, many  
6 Zooms and back and forth and we were selected.

7 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: And can you just clarify,  
8 you applied to the RFEI?

9 STUART REID: No, no we did not apply for the  
10 RFEI, we applied to the RFP under the universal  
11 service program.

12 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, and you got  
13 selected.

14 STUART REID: We got selected. We were one of I  
15 think 11.

16 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: And this was what year  
17 roughly?

18 STUART REID: It was 2021.

19 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Okay.

20 STUART REID: And they made a big public  
21 announcement in October of last year. I have the  
22 press release; I can certainly share that with you.  
23 We were selected, the smart community nation if they  
24 have a call Ethel Velez, a call from myself talking  
25

3 about how excited we are to be selected. This could  
4 \$7 million.

5 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Hmm, hmm, for the master  
6 plan.

7 STUART REID: Yeah, for the master plan. We were  
8 selected as one of 11 providers and uh, then when the  
9 new guys came in, we heard oh, that it's been put on  
10 pause.

11 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Truly, yeah.

12 STUART REID: And even though I heard some lip  
13 service that oh, we're talking to people, nobody has  
14 reached out to us. We haven't heard anything.

15 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you Mr. Reid for  
16 your testimony. This was crucial. We will be  
17 following up with you. I really want to learn more  
18 about how this organization works. I think it's  
19 phenomenal. I think we really should be coming at  
20 all services, community centered, resident focused,  
21 and it should really be about empowering folks. I  
22 appreciate it. Thank you for sharing your  
23 experience.

24 STUART REID: Okay, thank you.

25 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Next, we have?

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yeah, we have Mr. Joseph.  
4 Mr. Joseph, you may begin when ready.

5 PATRICK JOSEPH: Thank you. Thank you for the  
6 opportunity to testify today on the issue of  
7 broadband and equal access to the internet in New  
8 York City. My name is Patrick Joseph, I'm the Policy  
9 Analyst at Community Service Society of New York.  
10 It's a nonprofit that working to eradicate poverty in  
11 New York.

12 Since 2002, CSS has conducted a public opinion  
13 survey of New Yorkers called the unheard third.  
14 Every year we use the insights from that survey to  
15 elevate the concerns of low-income New Yorkers. In  
16 2021, recognizing that the COVID-19 pandemic have  
17 moved work and schooling into the home, we ask New  
18 Yorkers a battery of survey questions related to  
19 internet access. Based on our survey results, we  
20 learned that the pandemic exacerbated existing  
21 disparities and access to broadband technology in  
22 myriad ways. I'll send a link to the full report,  
23 but I'll highlight three of our findings here for the  
24 hearing. First, households in the Bronx were the  
25 most likely to report difficulties with internet  
access at home when compared to other boroughs.

3 Almost a quarter of Bronx residents reported that  
4 their household lacked home internet access in the  
5 past year. For comparison, that was double the share  
6 of homes in Brooklyn and Queens.

7 Additionally, one out of every four residents  
8 said that they had an inadequate number of devices at  
9 home to access the internet.

10 Our second key finding was the prevalence – it  
11 was related to the prevalence of the digital divide  
12 and how it impacted folks trying to climb the  
13 economic ladder. For residents in public housing,  
14 for example, they experienced even greater setbacks  
15 than the rest of New York City. We found that 40  
16 percent of New Yorkers were prevented from completing  
17 online schooling, due to the lack of internet access  
18 and working devices.

19 Nearly one-third of our respondents said it was a  
20 barrier to online job-related training. And nearly  
21 half of public housing residents reported these  
22 challenges, cut them from completing online  
23 education, job training, or telehealth visits.

24 Lastly, what we looked at, the relationship between  
25 the pandemic and the education system, and we found  
that parents in New York City are deeply concerned

3 about their children's education prospects. Nearly  
4 65 percent of low-income parents surveyed said that  
5 the impacts from the pandemic would have a long-  
6 lasting set back on their child's education. Among  
7 low-income parents, a staggering 74 percent of Latinx  
8 parents said that the pandemic would have long  
9 lasting setbacks for their children.

10 So, considering these findings and the necessity  
11 for internet access for modern day education, work  
12 and life, we believe it's time that we find a path  
13 toward a free, municipal internet. Internet access  
14 should be a public good. We shouldn't see it any  
15 different from parks, roads, and street lights.  
16 Cities in the U.S. and around the world are already  
17 trending in this direction and some countries, like  
18 Estonia for example, have already made this possible  
19 for their whole country. We believe there's no  
20 reason for New York City to fall behind on this  
21 front. We also have three recommendations. I know  
22 my time is up, but I can say them quickly if you will  
23 allow it.

24 So, first and foremost, while we're working  
25 towards getting free municipal internet for our city,  
we think the things that we can do through an – in an

3 equity focused lens to get us closer to closing that  
4 digital divide, first and foremost, it's the Bronx.  
5 We recommended starting a municipal internet pilot in  
6 the Bronx. Of course, that was before this  
7 announcement. We dropped this report a couple weeks  
8 ago, which again, I'll send to the Council, but you  
9 know, it's beyond NYCHA. We believe that the most  
10 equitable approach would be to start in the areas  
11 that have the highest needs and directly challenge  
12 those inequities there when it comes to internet  
13 access.

14 To the Mayor's credit, they have been installing  
15 those internet kiosks in the Bronx but as Council  
16 Member Brewer suggested earlier, they're hardly  
17 replacement for having high speed internet at home or  
18 when you're on the go.

19 Second, is related to the announcement that was  
20 made this morning about NYCHA residents. I keep  
21 hearing the word affordable, but we really believe  
22 that we should have free internet access for our  
23 NYCHA residents. If we're going to really make a  
24 dent in some of the problems that I previously stated  
25 statistically.

3 Again, nearly half of respondents in public  
4 housing, so they had difficulties accessing job  
5 training, online school and telehealth because of  
6 issues with internet connectivity.

7 Uhm, and lastly, for public school students, it  
8 really should go without saying that we just need to  
9 provide students with the devices they need.

10 Internet access etc. But also, that it should be  
11 recorded. The public needs to know how far along  
12 we're going to meeting this need. As you mentioned  
13 earlier, there was a form of this during the pandemic  
14 but even by the DOE's own calculations, they had  
15 fallen at least 2,000 devices short of their goal  
16 during the time when it was needed most. So,  
17 conclusion, I just want to say that we at Community  
18 Services Society, we believe strongly that the issue  
19 of internet access should be resolved. If we were to  
20 create a more equitable city, we believe it's time to  
21 become a more modern-day society and thank you for  
22 having this hearing on a very critical issue,  
23 appreciate it.

24 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you Mr. Joseph.  
25 Please do share the CSS's report. I think it would  
help support a lot of the bill that we're trying to

3 introduce today. As you can tell, we were met with a  
4 ton of push back from the Administration saying it's  
5 not really real. Like, what we're feeling on the  
6 ground and what our communities are feeling, and I  
7 think your survey certainly uplifts that argument.  
8 So, please do share and thank you for sticking around  
9 for the testimony.

10 PATRICK JOSEPH: Absolutely, thank you for having  
11 this hearing.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you again Mr. Joseph  
13 and our next panelists are Julian Kline and Annette  
14 Tomlin.

15 Mr. Kline, you may begin.

16 JULIAN KLINE: Hi, good afternoon Council Member.  
17 My name is Julian Kline, I'm the Head of Policy at  
18 Tech NYC, a nonprofit organization representing  
19 roughly 800 technology companies in New York. We  
20 work with government and community partners to foster  
21 a dynamic ecosystem, so that New York remains the  
22 best place in the country to start and grow a  
23 technology company. Equal access to broadband and  
24 the internet is a top priority for us. The need for  
25 universal internet access became even clearer during



3 COVID-19 as remote learning and working became our  
4 new reality.

5 According to data release prior to COVID-19, 29  
6 percent of New York City households and \$1.5 million  
7 New York City residents did not have broadband at  
8 home. Better access to the internet will lead to  
9 improved education outcomes, expanded employment  
10 opportunities, more profitable businesses and  
11 stronger connections with family. New York City has  
12 recognized this need and invested in it, including  
13 Link NYC's new 5G kiosks, which are currently being  
14 installed throughout the city and will provide free  
15 public Wi-Fi at extended distances providing  
16 connections for families without internet.

17 In addition to Link NYC kiosks, the city must  
18 utilize existing infrastructure to extent free public  
19 Wi-Fi to residents and visitors. Tech NYC supports  
20 Intro. 440 which would require city agencies with  
21 secure public Wi-Fi capabilities to expand Wi-Fi for  
22 the surrounding public.

23 As for expanding access at home, one of our most  
24 effective tools is the Affordable Connectivity  
25 Program which offers a \$30 discount for broadband  
service to low-income residents. Similarly, most

3 broadband providers offer a \$30 monthly option which  
4 results in households that qualify for government  
5 subsidies to receive no bill for internet service.

6 Tech NYC supports Intro. 599 which is aimed to  
7 increasing awareness about affordable internet  
8 programs in helping students and their families get  
9 enrolled. To increase participation, we recommend  
10 that the city coordinate with the established  
11 internet service provider since their enrollment  
12 processes may differ.

13 Intro. 241, which would provide mobile Wi-Fi  
14 hotspots to all public-school students is also an  
15 exciting proposal. By issuing hotspots, students  
16 will have increased access to the internet, so they  
17 can complete their assignments and stay connected  
18 with their teachers.

19 Tech NYC recommends that this bill includes  
20 issuing LTE enabled computing devices as well. New  
21 York City DOE is already a provider of connected  
22 tablets and computing devices including those which  
23 can be preprogrammed with educational software. This  
24 will improve connectivity, ensure that students have  
25 the tools needed to log on and complete their  
assignments. Thank you and we look forward to

3 working with the Council on bridging the digital  
4 divide.

5 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you. Thank you for  
6 your support and your suggestions. Thank you.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Ms. Tomlin.

8 ANNETTE TOMLIN: Okay, thank you. Good  
9 afternoon. My name is Annette Tomlin and I thank you  
10 for this opportunity. I am a Vocal leader for the  
11 Homeless Union and today I'm here to represent the  
12 under deserved and we need high quality universal  
13 internet for all people, not those who can just  
14 afford it.

15 Having universal internet would give us safer,  
16 cheaper options and ensure that no one is left  
17 disconnected from their communities. There is plenty  
18 of federal funding assets that would help build this  
19 \$1 billion connect all for federal funding. \$150  
20 million franchise fees collected in New York City;  
21 city owned infrastructure. The internet is an  
22 essential need and right now is divided between the  
23 have and have nots.

24 Verizon, Optimum and Altice are predators. We  
25 have been forced to pay high prices for sole services  
or even services that don't exist. In 2020, there

3 was supposed to be a huge internet master plan where  
4 adults investments. When the city abandoned  
5 investments for technology, it also abandoned Black  
6 and Brown communities.

7 I was just basically listening to the testimonies  
8 that the gentleman has spoken about with the Big  
9 Apple and it's unfortunate that even when we look at  
10 doing this here, okay, we need to Zoom, so we  
11 understand the importance of actually having the  
12 internet service. I come from an era where we just  
13 had basics okay, and again, like some kind old school  
14 but with the new technology, everybody basically  
15 needs the tiers, essential.

16 Okay, people that are in shelters, where we had  
17 to go speak to our doctors, okay, everything was from  
18 tele via, you know everything and without having that  
19 quality speed, you know you can't do this here and it  
20 is impossible to actually stay connected. So, uhm, I  
21 ask for you all and as well as public to continue  
22 this fight because it's definitely needed, and it is  
23 essential, and I thank you for the opportunity to  
24 speak today. Thank you.

25 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you all panelists and  
our next panelist will be Anthony Riddle.

3 ANTHONY RIDDLE: Thank you for waiting for me to  
4 testify here. I know its been a long afternoon.  
5 Okay, well, I won't take all that. My name is  
6 Anthony Riddle, I am the Senior Vice President for  
7 Community Media at Brick Arts Media in Brooklyn.  
8 We're the public access provider in Brooklyn. Brick  
9 through Brooklyn free speech would like to offer  
10 support for the discussion of each of the three  
11 pieces of legislation that we hear today.

12 We favor establishment of a cable franchise  
13 agreements website. This would make it much easier  
14 for the five community media centers that operate  
15 under side agreements to the current franchises which  
16 include Brick, Bronx Net, Manhattan Neighborhood  
17 Network, Queens Public Television and Staten Island  
18 Community Television to keep apprised of current  
19 franchise renegotiation process. We are important  
20 partners to the city for organizing strong community  
21 support in its upcoming cable franchise negotiations.

22 For decades, Brick and the New York City  
23 community media centers have been the leading  
24 providers of access to the technology that has  
25 bridged the communications gap for young people who  
would otherwise be left behind. In fact, during the

3 lock down, we provided technical support and  
4 distribution for the department of education in each  
5 of our boroughs, facilitating daily classes on our  
6 cable channels, provided by the cable franchise site  
7 agreements. We support the provision of hotspots to  
8 students and stand ready to provide the technical  
9 support and training needed to make them effective,  
10 not just for individuals but for communities and for  
11 groups of people to be able to gain the kinds of  
12 services that they need.

13 Finally, we support providing Wi-Fi connectivity  
14 to communities that would otherwise be left behind.  
15 Again, New York City's community media centers look  
16 forward to providing training for the end users and  
17 the vision to raise this wonderful idea up to its  
18 full potential for bringing the beauty of our  
19 individual voices into a choir of tremendous harmony.  
20 New York's Community media centers look forward to  
21 working with the Committee on Technology, the  
22 Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises and with OTI to  
23 keep New York a national leader in community-based  
24 technology.

25 And I'd just like to add one answer to one of the  
questions that came up earlier, which is that uhm, we

1 think it's good that the franchises have been  
2 conformed to ending at the same time. We know that  
3 this has put us off about three years from when they  
4 should have been negotiated before and for the most  
5 part, that's not a bad thing. But one of the things  
6 that has been heard, is the fact that the city would  
7 normally do a technical audit of the systems. And  
8 so, when there were complaints about whether the  
9 systems work properly or not, this would be the kind  
10 of thing that would be uncovered in preparation for  
11 the negotiations and because we're not in  
12 negotiation, we haven't done those kinds of surveys  
13 and therefore, frankly a lot of customers are  
14 receiving substandard services. Not the cable  
15 companies fault you know because they're in business.  
16 They do what they do. It's our responsibility to  
17 check and make sure that they are delivering the  
18 services that they're supposed to.

19  
20 Again, we're here to be a partner for you. We  
21 have a lot of experience in negotiating the franchise  
22 agreements and uhm, you're welcome to call on us at  
23 any time.

24 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you Mr. Riddle.  
25 Thank you for your testimony.

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Mr. Riddle and  
4 thank you all panelists and now, we turn to all  
5 witnesses on line. And our first witness is William  
6 Luckman.

7 WILLIAM LUCKMAN: Hello.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

9 WILLIAM LUCKMAN: Can you hear me alright?

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Yes.

11 WILLIAM LUCKMAN: Great. Good afternoon. My  
12 name is William Luckman, and I am a Brooklyn resident  
13 in the 36<sup>th</sup> District. I'm also currently involved  
14 with the City University of New York Graduate Center  
15 where I am pursuing the masters science degree in  
16 data analysis in visualization. I just want to thank  
17 Chairperson Gutiérrez and the rest of the Council for  
18 calling this hearing today and I'm grateful for the  
19 opportunity to discuss some of these efforts to  
20 bridge the digital divide as well as my research into  
21 city spending on telecommunications infrastructure.

22 So, as part of my testimony, I have submitted a  
23 research project that was completed in fall of 2021.  
24 Using publicly available data from the City  
25 Comptrollers Office and other data made available  
through the NYC open data portal, as well as



3 complimentary research, I would be able to illustrate  
4 that the digital divide in New York City who has high  
5 speed normal access and who does not is likely a  
6 question of income. I was also able to illustrate  
7 that as a matter of policy, city spending and  
8 franchises telecommunications over the past decade  
9 has been a complete disaster.

10 Uhm, in New York City, there's one correlation  
11 which median income to lower its broadband reduction  
12 by zip code. That's not a coincidence. In New York  
13 City, the provision of last mile in home internet  
14 service is dominated by a big three or four profit  
15 companies, Verizon, Optimum, AKA Altice, Charter  
16 Spectrum, and the need to make profits off of the  
17 internet service provision instead of providing it as  
18 a public utility, we enhance the digital divide in  
19 two days.

20 First, high price and unit services are  
21 unaffordable to many New Yorkers and secondly, even  
22 if some residents can afford service, the providers  
23 notified it isn't profitable for them to build  
24 broadband infrastructure in neighborhoods where most  
25 can't pay.

3 These big three ISP's have yearly revenues in the  
4 billions of dollars. In New York, they have to pay  
5 their franchise today. I found that these fees are  
6 quite small compared to the revenues that these  
7 companies are generating and there also have been  
8 mentioned earlier today in other testimonies, there's  
9 been a number of violations of the franchise of the  
10 big three, including labor disputes, lied without  
11 coverage areas, coverage speeds, build out. The city  
12 and state have had to take legal action against all  
13 three of these major providers and despite this, the  
14 franchise agreement, [DISTORTED AUDIO 2:28:48].

15 AMI, it's worth more than that. The city seems  
16 to be taken a same approach with Link NYC. You know  
17 they didn't meet the demand of the original  
18 agreement. They didn't build on the kiosk they said  
19 they were going to. They owed the city tons of  
20 millions of dollars and now and now the city seems to  
21 be doubling down on contracts with the Link NYC  
22 consortium 5G rollout.

23 So, it seems like problematic from a policy  
24 standpoint. Uhm, but yeah, possibly more egregious  
25 and the lack of enforcer and the -

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

3 WILLIAM LOCKMAN: Okay, just wanted to follow up  
4 on two points and just say that in terms of Intro.  
5 112, from my research, it would be very useful to  
6 have quarterly reports included in there. So,  
7 apparently the franchisees are meant to submit  
8 quarterly reports for the city on their resumes of  
9 coverage and other things like that. Those are to be  
10 publicly available, I tried to find them online and  
11 couldn't. I reached out to DoITT personally and  
12 couldn't. So, if you could add that to Intro. 112,  
13 uh, legislation, I think that would be a good  
14 addition there.

15 And also, it just seems like, you know we've  
16 heard \$30 million a year just going back to the big  
17 three. It seems like a poor use of city funds when  
18 [DISTORTED AUDIO 2:30:02] infrastructure as Mr.  
19 Joseph mentioned earlier. It seems like a public  
20 municipal system would be of interest. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you Mr. Lockman and  
22 thank you for sticking around. I look forward to  
23 reading your project. We just came across it now and  
24 we'll be discussing.

25 WILLIAM LOCKMAN: Yeah, okay.

CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you so much.

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you again Mr. Lockman  
3 and our next panelist is Rebecca Miller.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

5 REBECCA MILLER: Hi, good afternoon, thank you so  
6 much for having me here to testify. My name is  
7 Rebecca Miller, and I am the New York State  
8 Legislative Director for CWA District 1. District 1  
9 represent workers in the and public sector who work  
10 in telecommunications, IT, media broadcast, cable  
11 television, education, health care, public service  
12 and other fields. This includes 15,000 employees in  
13 the telecommunications industry in New York State.

14 CWA members are highly trained career technicians  
15 and service representatives who build and service our  
16 telecommunications network, also consumers who rely  
17 on quality internet service. CWA is deeply committed  
18 to ensuring universal access to high speed, high  
19 quality and affordable broadband as well as good jobs  
20 in the intel communications industry.

21 We know that access is a combination of both  
22 actual technological infrastructure as well as  
23 affordability and unfortunately three decades of  
24 deregulation have left policy makers with few tools  
25 or sufficient tools to ensure universal access.

3 So, the city and state governments have relied on  
4 competition rather than regulation to meet their  
5 goals. This has led to the digital divide. It has  
6 meant higher investment in more profitable areas. It  
7 has left too many New Yorkers behind by allowing  
8 broadband companies to pick and choose where they  
9 want service with high-speed fiber access.

10 So, in many communities we know that this has  
11 created essentially a cable monopoly resulting in  
12 expensive and inadequate service for New Yorkers.

13 From listening to the testimony today, I do not  
14 think I need to go through the importance of  
15 addressing the digital divide. Surely this should be  
16 a priority for our city and to do that, it is  
17 important to understand that we need to address both  
18 the technology side and the affordability in New York  
19 City. We believe that affordability is the main  
20 concern and as the pandemic revealed the toll, the  
21 digital divide was happening, the federal government  
22 launched an ACP. But a lot of discussion today about  
23 the ACP.

24 We have been really pleased to see how the ACP  
25 has been used in this city, so we have been uhm,  
working to ensure that people can actually get

3 connected through the ACP and enrolled into the  
4 internet, as this is a no cost solution for the city,  
5 and it can happen today. It's an immediate solution  
6 for the digital divide in New York City.

7 So, unfortunately this program has not been  
8 utilized to the full extent. We see estimates of  
9 about a quarter of eligible Americans taking  
10 advantage of the program and that's why we've been  
11 partnering with Council Members, with nonprofits, to  
12 get New Yorkers enrolled.

13 So, in a model spearheaded by Council Member  
14 Julie Menin, who spoke earlier and in collaboration  
15 with Education Super Highway, we supported and parted  
16 efforts to enroll -

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

18 REBECCA MILLER: From start to finish. I would  
19 just say in conclusion here that we have a number of  
20 these events coming up, we are deeply supportive of  
21 this effort. Again, this is - Council Member Menin  
22 paved the way by getting providers to create these  
23 high-quality plans for less than \$30, so the stuff  
24 can be completely covered of the cost of the service.

25 And together, with community organizations, if  
the city puts resources behind the actual enrollment

3 process, we can really make sure that this program is  
4 fully utilized, again at no cost to the city.

5 And then the final thing also is that in addition  
6 to ensuring that we close the digital divide, we  
7 cannot leave behind workers. It is vital that we  
8 remain committed to closing the digital divide while  
9 maintaining good jobs in telecommunications industry.  
10 We know that New York is a winning town, and we  
11 encourage the Council to prioritize good union jobs  
12 in the industry as they address these issues. Thank  
13 you so much for your time and allowing me to speak  
14 here.

15 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you. We got all of  
16 it. Thank you so much.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thanks Ms. Miller and our  
18 next panelist will be Andrew Kennedy.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

20 ANDREW KENNEDY: Hello, can you hear me alright?

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Yes, we can.

22 ANDREW KENNEDY: Great, good afternoon. My name  
23 is Andrew Kennedy, I'm a Volunteer Organizer with the  
24 New York City Democratic Socialist of America Tech  
25 Action Working Group, which is a member of the  
internet NYC Coalition which is fighting to establish

3 a publicly owned municipal broadband provider to make  
4 sure every New Yorker can access education,  
5 healthcare and other essential services online.

6 Thank you Chairwoman Gutiérrez for helping put this  
7 hearing together today. I'm extremely grateful to  
8 have the opportunity to highlight steps that the City  
9 Council can take to be on handouts to and increasing  
10 reliance by the city on the failed public, private  
11 partnerships with the monopolist, ISP's Charter,  
12 Altice and Verizon that create the dire internet  
13 access status quo in the first place.

14 Providing immediate access to New Yorkers  
15 internet is no doubt the city's number one priority  
16 but continuing to write blank checks to a monopolist  
17 and short sided and alarming given the long history  
18 of broken promises, horrible service, antilabor and  
19 privacy practices, amongst other concerns.

20 In New York City, we have an opportunity to  
21 establish municipal broadband utility to ensure the  
22 provision of high quality, home broadband to millions  
23 of New Yorkers lacking access and improve the service  
24 to the millions of New Yorkers that pay way too much  
25 for terrible service.



3 Hundreds of municipalities across the country  
4 show that from a singular focus on the subsidized  
5 public, private partnership model and establishing  
6 municipal internet utility, they are able to provide  
7 faster, more affordable or transparent internet  
8 service.

9 To start, the City Council should pass a local  
10 law requiring the city to provide a high quality free  
11 and low cost, future proof broadband connection to  
12 every New Yorker by 2026. With that requirement in  
13 place, the city can establish a city owned internet  
14 utility to provide the university available service  
15 that meets the characteristics required by the  
16 initial piece of legislation.

17 The money is available between federal and state  
18 funding like the \$1.4 billion in New York State  
19 Connect All funding, franchise fees from the private  
20 IFP's that could be allocated to the network and  
21 maybe even the \$157 million in the internet master  
22 plan funded with the cities holding hostage.

23 The infrastructure is also available with the  
24 network. Including city owned networks,  
25 infrastructure, call centers and those with state  
partners like the New York power authority. The city

3 also introduced reforms to its franchise agreements  
4 and enforced an audit existing future franchise lease  
5 to hold them accountable and effectively utilize  
6 their infrastructure and public rights of way.

7 Not only will establishing the public network  
8 help bridge the digital divide and improve city  
9 service, but by doing so, the city will create good  
10 union jobs and provide an alternative like Charter,  
11 Spectrum, and Altice with a very long history of  
12 union busting and other antilabor practices. A union  
13 network will also improve public safety because only  
14 a union network with a long-term preparedness  
15 mindset, free from short term investor demands can  
16 place privacy and ongoing network resiliency against  
17 diversity effects of climate change at the center of  
18 its strategy.

19 New Yorkers in short deserve a broadband network  
20 that prioritizes residents and workers, not profits.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

22 ANDREW KENNEDY: As it's in our power to make the  
23 public network a reality. The time to act is now.  
24 Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity. I  
25 really appreciate it.

3 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you so much Andrew.  
4 Thank you.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Mr. Kennedy. Our  
6 next panelist is Leo Asin.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

8 LEO ASEN: Good afternoon Chair Gutiérrez. My  
9 name is Leo Asen, I'm the State President of AARP New  
10 York, which

11 Thank you for providing me with the opportunity  
12 to testify at today's hearing to discuss how  
13 disparities in the broadband access have impacted  
14 global New Yorkers citywide.

15 Global New Yorkers are one of the fastest groups  
16 and represent 13 percent of the current population,  
17 the rest broadband at 41 percent in 2040. As New  
18 York City's population is getting older, that means  
19 we need to address the changes of access to  
20 affordable [DISTORTED AUDIO 2:39:02] in digital  
21 literacy.

22 Pre COVID-19 to the older New Yorkers lack of  
23 access to broadband. The pandemic required  
24 transition to online platforms and without access, we  
25 are disconnected. With home delivered meals and  
grocery deliveries, medicine, scheduling vaccine and

3 broadband similar, we have struggled to remain  
4 connected toward family and friends. [DISTORTED  
5 AUDIO 2:39:28] the necessary technological literacy  
6 and access to training programs.

7 As the city and the administration needs to  
8 address these problems, AARP urges the city to expand  
9 its investment with high-speed internet  
10 infrastructure. Additionally, AARP wants the City  
11 Council to pass legislation that will require the  
12 city release a power progress report. AARP  
13 recommends that the Mayor and the City Council also  
14 [DISTORED AUDIO 2:39:57-2:39:39] seniors to improve  
15 their technology facilities. AARP urges the City  
16 Council and the Mayor to make meaningful investments  
17 in service providers who offer digital literacy  
18 training to serve more clients and improve overall  
19 digital literacy.

20 Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much Mr. Asen.  
22 And our next and final panelist is Kassi Keith.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting team.

24 KASSI KEITH: Hi, my name is Kassi Keith, I'm a  
25 leader of Vocal New York Homeless Union. I'd like to  
thank Council Member Gutierrez for having this

3 hearing. Today I would like to represent the New  
4 York City shelters with no internet access. We need  
5 high quality internet for all people. And the reason  
6 why we need internet in the shelter is because New  
7 York City does not require to provide a city shelter  
8 internet service. And we need internet service for  
9 family visits, for therapy session, for job search  
10 and job training and in my case, I have a medical  
11 device implanted. I have a monitor that require Wi-  
12 Fi to transmit data and report to my doctors,  
13 including a CPAP machine that reports data to my  
14 doctors. And I wasn't able to do so recently, and it  
15 created an unusual problem because the doctors were  
16 not able to receive anything. And then we also have  
17 the ACP program and I want to talk about ACP.

18 ACP is really unreliable because a device, like I  
19 have a device right now that it was provided to me by  
20 ACP program and after five months, the device stopped  
21 working even though I was using it every day for  
22 searching for everything and I'm not the only person  
23 that has this issue and we have to provide housing  
24 search. Every week, they have to be able to give  
25 manager a number of housing search and we can't do it  
with unreliable devices.

2 And uhm, we have data that tell us that ACP; some  
3 of the devices provide us limited data but after  
4 using a certain amount of data, less than 10  
5 gigabyte, it start to slow down and you're no longer  
6 able to receive, either you have a low Wi-Fi  
7 frequency, or you have absolutely slow internet  
8 access, and you can't do anything. And so, in that  
9 case, they give you a free device like a tablet but  
10 after five months; so, they tell you you're going to  
11 have it for four years but after five months of using  
12 the internet stop and service provider was over, and  
13 you can't get it connected back.

14 And the thing is once you have the device, you  
15 cannot sign up for another device because you already  
16 show in the system that you have a device, but you  
17 have a device that is not working.

18 And so, this ACP government program that they  
19 give to people uh -

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

21 KASSI KEITH: Also, unreliable. So, I want to  
22 thank you for having this hearing and can you look  
23 into it and please help us have internet service in  
24 the shelter, in all shelter, not just family shelter

3 but also single adult shelter including women and  
4 men. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you Ms. Keith for  
6 your testimony. Can I ask you a question? Do you  
7 mind sharing what provider you work with under the  
8 ACP program?

9 KASSI KEITH: For my son I had, what do you call  
10 it? Right now, I have Safe Link and even today I  
11 went to the doctor, I stepped outside and waited for  
12 my Access A Ride and the phone dead. I couldn't even  
13 make a call. I had to shut it down. It was the  
14 second time that happened and the previous provider,  
15 is the one that everybody use, oh, my God.

16 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: No worries. Don't worry  
17 about it. If you do find it, you can email it to me.

18 KASSI KEITH: This tablet was given to me - you  
19 know there's no office where you can go into to sign  
20 up. They usually sign you up on the street or yeah.  
21 And this device and after it stopped working it shows  
22 that it was powered by T Mobile. When I contacted T  
23 Mobile, they told me no because it's a SKY device,  
24 but T Mobile told me they had nothing to do with the  
25 provider. To find the provider, I had to contact the  
ACP Program and they told me uhm, even though I gave

1  
2 them the I number, no one can find who is the  
3 provider. No one can give me the number of the  
4 provider. It's not them. I can't find who the  
5 provider to connect me back and I'm stuck with a  
6 device that has intermittent service unless I use a  
7 Wi-Fi or what you call it. I tried to sign up for  
8 another device and it shows you already have but who  
9 is the provider?

10 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you so much Ms.  
11 Keith. I'm really glad that you testified. I have a  
12 lot of questions about ACP program, so thank you for  
13 raising that here and you can always, if you have any  
14 more questions or you need help, you can email the  
15 same email you used to sign up to testify.

16 KASSI KEITH: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you so much.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you very much for your  
19 testimony. I want to thank all panelists. We do not  
20 have anymore witnesses in person and do not have  
21 anymore witnesses registered online and that will  
22 conclude our testimonies and I'm going to turn to  
23 Chair Gutiérrez to adjourn the hearing.

24 CHAIRPERSON GUTIÉRREZ: That's right. Thank you  
25 everyone who testified. Thank you to Ana and Anya on



my team. Thank you Irene. A lot of follow ups.

Have a great day everyone. [GAVEL]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date October 13, 2022