

# Basic Facts about GAATN

## **Purpose of GAATN**

The Greater Austin Area Telecommunications Network is a consortium of seven government and education entities collaborating on a fiber optic communications network including data, voice, and video services across the entire Austin metro area.

## **History of GAATN**

GAATN was conceived in the 1980s to deliver reliable and economical communication services to the public sector. Costs for providing Austin ISD voice services alone in 1988 had approached \$1 million. Projections indicated that it was likely those costs would triple over the next 10 years. Similar costs were being realized at the City of Austin. An engineering study on possible solutions recommended construction of a network that could be utilized not just for voice, but for data and video as well. In what would become a lasting collaboration, AISD approached the City of Austin about sharing the cost and ownership of a new fiber network. The proposal was received enthusiastically and soon two additional partners came on board. In 1993, Austin ISD, the City of Austin, Travis County, and ACC developed an interlocal agreement to construct, own, and manage a fiber network that would eventually serve schools, libraries, local government facilities, and several higher education institutions. In 1994, the State of Texas DIR, the University of Texas, and LCRA joined GAATN.

## **GAATN Members**

The seven GAATN participants are Austin ISD, City of Austin, Travis County, Austin Community College, State of Texas DIR, University of Texas, and Lower Colorado River Authority.

## **GAATN Network Sites**

The network consists of approximately 500 miles of fiber optic cable connecting more than 550 partner sites including schools, emergency facilities, and government buildings. The network can be expanded to include additional sites, and the design enables the system to remain operational despite potential disasters such as cable cuts, which can put existing commercial networks out of service for days.

## **GAATN Annual Budget**

GAATN's annual operating budget averages \$1.8 million.

## **GAATN Structure**

GAATN has an active Board of Directors who are responsible for setting policies and making financial decisions for the network. The Board has a Technical Subcommittee to plan, review, and make technical recommendations to the Board. The City of Austin serves as the network management provider for GAATN through a service level agreement. Austin ISD serves as the fiscal agent for GAATN.

**GAATN Cost Avoidance Savings:** The flexibility and cost avoidance for the GAATN partners has increased every year; in FY17, GAATN partners realized a combined savings of \$29 million. In FY17, the City of Austin achieved \$6.58 million in cost avoidance by use of GAATN.