



COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

TECHNOLOGY COMMISSION

RECOMMENDATION NUMBER: 20250305-008:

REGARDING: Recommendation for expanding public internet access in the FY26 budget

WHEREAS, reliable internet access is essential for education, employment, healthcare, and civic engagement; and

WHEREAS, the Travis County - City of Austin Broadband and Digital Equity Needs Assessment found that many residents rely on public Wi-Fi to access essential services but face inconsistent availability; and

WHEREAS, expanding free public internet access at libraries, parks, transit hubs, and community centers would increase digital inclusion for residents without reliable home connectivity; and

WHEREAS, investment in public Wi-Fi infrastructure would particularly benefit lower-income residents, unhoused individuals, ADA applicable community members, and communities with limited broadband options; and

WHEREAS, extending public Wi-Fi service hours and coverage areas would enhance accessibility for those who rely on it for job applications, remote learning, and telehealth services; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Technology Commission recommends that the Austin City Council allocate funding and exploration in partnership with EDD to expand and enhance public internet access across the city, ensuring equitable digital access for all residents in the following ways:

- Public internet access points with after-hour and weekend hours of operation
- Public computer labs should be equipped with robust features, like webcams and private spaces for private communications (like telehealth visits) and device charging stations
- Emergency response locations should have resilient internet/phone connectivity and charging stations.
- Expansion of public internet access points should be aligned according to digital divide index and other related data sources

Date of Approval: __ March 5th, 2025 _____

Record of the vote: Motion to approve made by Commissioner Combee and seconded by Commissioner Anga. The recommendation was approved on a vote of 6-0.

Attest:  _____

Dan Martinez

Community Technology Division

Economic Development Department / City of Austin