



MEMO / NOTE DE SERVICE

To /
Destinataire Mayor and Members of City Council

From /
Expéditeur Valerie Turner, General Manager,
Innovative Client Services

Stephen Willis, General Manager,
Planning, Infrastructure & Economic
Development

Subject / Objet Update on Connectivity Date: August 3 2021

In November 2017, Ottawa City Council approved Ottawa's Smart City Strategy, titled [Smart City 2.0](#). The Smart City Strategy has been an anchor for innovation, economic development, and enhancements to Ottawa's connectivity landscape over the past several years.

As this landscape continues to evolve, there is an increased interest in expanding the current scope of the Connected City pillar. Specifically, staff have been asked to consider the following:

- The possibility of expanding the City's public wi-fi offering;
- The feasibility of providing broadband connectivity / internet access as a public utility service;
- The City's role in improving connectivity for underserved residents (both urban and rural); and
- Options for working with internet service providers to achieve the City's connectivity goals.

The purpose of this memo is to highlight the activities staff are currently taking in response to the aforementioned and to advise Members of Council as to when they can expect a more complete update on these matters.

Upcoming Updates

Staff will be bringing forward three separate connectivity-related updates to City Council Committees beginning this fall.

Update to the Information Technology Sub-Committee

At the September 2020 meeting of the Information Technology Sub-Committee (ITSC), staff were directed to consider whether there are opportunities for the City of Ottawa to provide broadband connectivity as a potential utility service in order to address concerns with access to and affordability of the internet in Ottawa.

In response, staff reached out to other municipalities that have implemented or are considering implementing this type of model (e.g., Toronto, Kingston, New York City) to determine the applicability of this approach for Ottawa. Staff have also been monitoring federal and provincial plans for addressing the issues of access and affordability to stay apprised of any emerging opportunities for the City.

Given the overall complexity of this matter, staff are now in the process of hiring professional services with expertise in this area to conduct an assessment of the feasibility of a public utility model for Ottawa, as well as any associated costs. This assessment will also consider the impact of this type of model on the City's public wi-fi program and will include consultation with members of ITSC.

It is anticipated that staff will provide an update to ITSC on this matter by the end of 2021.

Update to the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee

In February 2021, the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee (ARAC) provided direction to staff to bring forward an information report outlining the current policy and financial environment of rural broadband, the role of senior governments, the role of the City, and specific initiatives that Economic Development with support from the Right of Way branch can undertake for improved service in all underserved areas of Ottawa.

Staff are currently working on this report and will report back to ARAC in early Q1 2022.

Update to Transportation Committee

Access to the City's Rights of Way (ROW) is governed through individual Municipal Access Agreements (MAAs) with telecommunication providers. These agreements establish the overall relationship between the City and an individual provider and set the parameters for how broadband infrastructure is built and managed throughout Ottawa.

Staff have engaged a consultant to review and update the City's MAA template, which will serve as the starting point for negotiations with existing telecommunication providers as these agreements are renewed, as well as with new providers entering the Ottawa market.

As part of the terms under which the City consents to the use of its ROW, these agreements present an opportunity to work with telecommunication providers in achieving the City's connectivity objectives.

A report detailing the City's updated MAA template is targeted to be presented to Transportation Committee by the end of 2021.

In addition, it is also worth noting that staff have begun waiving Road Cut Permit fees associated with installing connectivity-related infrastructure in the rural areas of the City, in accordance with a direction that was handed down from Council in February 2021. The direction is to keep this in place until the end of the year. To date, the fees associated with nine Road Cut Permit applications have been waived.

cc: Steve Kanellakos, City Manager