



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
NEWS RELEASE

Consumer Counsel Elin Swanson Katz

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Elin Swanson Katz
860-827-2901 (office)
860-614-8424 (cell)

**MAYORS SEEK PARTNERS TO DEVELOP
GIGABIT INTERNET NETWORKS
IN CONNECTICUT; INVITE OTHERS
TO JOIN THE EFFORT**

(September 15, 2014 -- Hartford, CT) – New Haven Mayor Toni N. Harp, West Hartford Deputy Mayor Shari Cantor, Stamford Mayor David R. Martin and state Senator Beth Bye (D-West Hartford), state Comptroller Kevin Lembo and Consumer Counsel Elin Swanson Katz today issued a global call for companies and organizations to develop ultra-high-speed gigabit or “gig” Internet networks in the three cities.

The mayors issued a joint Request for Qualifications (“RFQ”) seeking information and dialogue with interested parties, hoping to increase access to ultra-high-speed gigabit networks in their cities and throughout Connecticut while simultaneously reducing the cost of such networks for businesses, high-tech industry, universities, homeowners and other users.

Gig networks deliver internet speeds of up to 1,000 megabits per second (Mbps), more than 100 times faster than the average home speed of about 9 Mbps.

The mayors’ RFQ has three goals:

- Create a world-leading gigabit-capable network in targeted commercial corridors – as well as in residential areas with demonstrated demand – in order to foster innovation, drive job creation and stimulate economic growth.
- Provide free or heavily discounted 10-100 MB (minimum) Internet service over a wired or wireless network to underserved and disadvantaged residential areas across the territories and diverse demographics.
- Deliver gigabit Internet service at prices comparable to other gigabit fiber communities across the nation.

The municipal effort grew from an April conference in Hartford on gigabit networks that was hosted by the Office of Consumer Counsel.

“As soon as we started the conversation about gig networks, we heard from businesses, universities, high-tech start-ups, mayors and first selectmen – really such a variety of stakeholders – about how greater Internet speeds at lower costs are essential to their functioning,” Katz said. Over the summer, Katz embarked on a series of listening-tour meetings across Connecticut (in conjunction with the Connecticut Technology Council) to gauge interest and support for gig networks.

“We knew it was an important economic development tool, but we’ve learned gig networks are also essential for medicine, precision manufacturing, education, e-government, many different people in different sectors clamoring for gig networks,” Katz said.

“It’s time we tear down the walls to gigabit Internet access in Connecticut,” said Sen. Bye, who along with Katz has been a prime mover in this municipal Internet enterprise. “Not only will businesses and universities thrive, but consumers will benefit from the lower prices and wider access that this initiative will create. We have the will and I believe we have the ability to make this happen for Connecticut.”

New Haven, Stamford and West Hartford have created a unique, “open-access” RFQ.

“These three cities have stepped out front to lead this project, but everyone involved in this project recognizes that there is strength in numbers,” Katz said. “They are therefore inviting any municipality in the state to join the conversation by simply submitting an addendum describing their town’s interest and assets. I don’t think there’s been anything quite like it around the country.”

“This project is an important step toward making Connecticut the first gigabit state,” Comptroller Lembo said. “It would be the ultimate economic assistance and incentive program – rewarding all business and industry with an infrastructure worthy of settling in Connecticut. It would serve as an open door to all businesses, including new ones and those already established here. The leadership of Mayors Harp, Martin and Cantor benefits not only their communities, but every community in Connecticut.”

“This collaboration among our cities and these state-level groups will lead Connecticut forward and avoid a damaging digital divide that could hinder the progress of residents, students, researchers and those doing business in our state,” New Haven Mayor Toni N. Harp said. “We’re eager to see what the market brings to our cities so we can put this technology in place to support commerce and new business in today’s digital, knowledge-based economy.”

West Hartford Deputy Mayor Shari Cantor explained her community’s interest in the RFQ.

“West Hartford is a thriving community that is comfortable being a leader in the state and the region,” she said. “We understand that we need to pursue the highway of the future, high-speed Internet, to position our community and our state to compete nationally and globally and remain a top-ranked community to live, work and play.”

Charles Ward, chief information officer and technology analyst for a private investment firm in West Hartford, noted the many advantages of low-cost gig networks.

“There’s no better example of how transformative gig Internet service can be than in Kansas City, where Google Fiber offers \$70 a month Gig service. In Kansas City, in both Missouri and Kansas, they’ve seen existing Internet providers cut their prices, even if they couldn’t match the speed of Google Fiber,” he said. “Real estate prices have skyrocketed, fueled by 20-somethings attracted to the area’s emerging startup scene who are working on what could be the next Google or Facebook.”

Ward also applauded Connecticut’s “bold investment” in The Jackson Laboratory for Genomic Medicine (JAX) in Farmington, “where genomics research using bioinformatics will generate oceans of data.” He questioned, however, how Jackson Lab’s employees would be able to access and work with the data from home without gig Internet service.

“Stamford is always looking toward the future,” said Mayor Martin. “As part of our city’s economic development strategy, it is important that Stamford continue to be on the leading edge of a technology that helps our local businesses be on the forefront of their own markets. It’s essential that the municipalities in this state work together as a whole on this project in order to help Connecticut achieve the success it is looking for.”

Ted Yang, the founder and CEO of MediaCrossing, Inc. in Stamford, also expressed support for the project.

“MediaCrossing, as a digital media trading start-up founded in Stamford, cannot succeed without convenient and cost-effective access to gigabit networks. Our competitors in New York City and San Francisco don’t think twice about having the best broadband speeds, and we need to level the playing field,” Yang said.

Dr. Yu-Hui Rogers, Site Director at JAX, also expressed enthusiasm for the gig project. “We would like to see the progress of science and medicine being limited only by our intellectual capacity and imagination, not by the speed and volume with which we exchange and share our data and ideas,” he said.

Blair Levin, Executive Director of Gig.U (a broad-based group of over 30 leading research universities across the U. S.) and an author of the National Broadband Plan, is widely regarded as one of the telecommunications industry’s most influential commentators and policymakers.

Levin is a Yale College and Yale Law School graduate, he advised the Office of Consumer Counsel on this project, and he cited the many educational needs for access to ultra-high-speed Internet and the links to gig networks at universities. He also spoke about Connecticut’s history as a technology leader.

“Throughout our nation’s history, Connecticut cities have been leaders in inventing the future. With this RFQ, Connecticut cities are again staking a claim to lead in the 21st century global information economy,” Levin said.

Echoing the need for low-cost gig service to support universities, faculty, staff and students, Mun Y. Choi, provost and executive vice president at the University of Connecticut, is enthusiastic about the

access to gigabit connectivity to foster innovations in educational programs, research collaborations and economic development.

“The high bandwidth connections among researchers will lead to breakthroughs in systems genomics for personalized medicine to advanced materials development for additive manufacturing and that we can make Connecticut the national leader in high performance computing, data visualization and cyber-security” Provost Choi said.

The RFQ, with instructions for submitting a municipal referendum, is available online at ct.gov/occ and <http://www.cityofnewhaven.com/PurchasingBureauOnline/index.asp>.

The City of New Haven will administer and coordinate the RFQ for the municipalities.

###