

Boston's Mayor Pitches Plan to Expand City's Internet Network, Connect Public Schools

June 26, 2014



DAVID PARSONS
PHOTOGRAPHY

Mayor Martin J. Walsh is pitching a plan to expand the city's high-speed Internet network to connect all Boston Public School buildings and increase the number of public Wi-Fi hotspots in the Hub.

Walsh wants to spend \$10.75 million over five years to expand the city's fiber-optic cable network to hook up 100 additional schools to high-speed Internet. The proposal is included in Walsh's capital budget, which is before the City Council.

"The mayor is committed to investing in improving the Internet connections for our schools and the students we serve," said Kate Norton, a spokeswoman for Walsh.

The fiber-optic network now connects about 200 city buildings, including police and fire stations and 26 schools. There are 128 schools in the city.

The move to bolster the Internet capability comes after the schools spent \$3 million on 10,000 Google Chromebooks, ultra-light laptops based on Google's Chrome browser. The laptops work without Internet access, but are designed to be used while connected.

City Councillor Michelle Wu said increasing Internet access for students is crucial. "It's important that Boston is providing the infrastructure for our kids, our students and our families," Wu said.

The expanded fiber-optic network also will be used to support public Wi-Fi. In May, Walsh announced Wicked Free Wi-Fi, Boston's new public wireless program that will focus on the city's Main Streets Districts. Most existing hotspots are built on top of access points in the current fiber-optic network.

Walsh has also repeatedly teased plans for a citywide fiber-optic network, saying "stay tuned."

©2014 the Boston Herald

<http://www.govtech.com/network/Mayor-pitches-plan-to-expand-citys-Internet-network-to-connect-public-schools-and-add-hotspots-.html>