

**WORK SESSION AGENDA
COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE
JUNE 18, 2018
CONFERENCE ROOM A**

IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE COUNCIL MEETING

1. Greater Minnesota Partnership Update – Dan Dorman
2. Hotspot Update – Julie Clinefelter
3. Administrative Report
4. Open Discussion



The Greater Minnesota Partnership Gets Results

Since its creation in 2014, the Greater Minnesota Partnership (GMNP) has emerged as the leading voice for Greater Minnesota economic development. The accomplishments below show the impact the GMNP has made in just a few short years. With your help, we can accomplish even more!



BROADBAND

- The GMNP was instrumental in the creation of the Border-to-Border Broadband Development Grant Program, which helps bring high-quality, high-speed broadband to more businesses and homes in Greater Minnesota.
- The Broadband Development Grant Program has received \$85.6M since it was established in 2014.



CHILD CARE

- The GMNP worked with other stakeholders to bring attention to the growing child care shortage in Greater Minnesota and its impact on economic development.
- In 2018, the GMNP actively pursued several pieces of legislation that aim to fund child care facilities, train more child care providers and increase funding for existing child care grants. Child care will continue to be a top priority in 2019.



JOB TRAINING

- The GMNP advocated for the creation of the Job Training Incentive Program, a fast, flexible and employer-driven program that provides grants to help Greater Minnesota businesses train workers needed to fill open positions.
- Job Training Incentive Program has received more than \$3M since it was established in 2015.



WORKFORCE HOUSING

- The GMNP has pushed for funding for programs that aim to address the workforce housing shortage that hampers economic growth in many Greater Minnesota communities.
- These programs have created more than 325 units with approximately \$5M in funding — a huge return on investment.
- The GMNP has also advocated for additional tools for cities to use to address the housing shortage, including other grants (funded at \$2M a year through 2021) and TIF districts (authorized by the Legislature in 2017).



INFRASTRUCTURE

- The GMNP is one of the leading advocates for the Greater Minnesota Business Development Public Infrastructure (BDPI) Grant Program, which provides funding so cities can provide the basic infrastructure needed to accommodate private business growth.
- BDPI Grant Program has received \$31.7M since the GMNP was formed in 2014.



BUSINESS PROPERTY TAXES

- The GMNP has advocated for reducing property taxes for Main Street businesses by fighting for an exemption of up to the first \$150,000 in commercial/industrial property value.
- In 2017, the Legislature passed an exemption from the state C/I levy starting at \$100,000.



The Child Care Conundrum

Exploring solutions to the child care shortage in Greater Minnesota



Ask almost any working parent in Greater Minnesota about child care and you are bound to get an earful. With seemingly endless waiting lists, hour-long commutes to and from child care, having to rely on family and friends until a spot opens up, it is no wonder many moms and dads opt to leave the workforce.

When there is a child care shortage, it is not only families who suffer.

Businesses and communities cannot grow and thrive unless they can attract new employees and residents, but business won't expand and families are reluctant to take a job if there is no child care available in the area. **This is not just a "family" issue, it is also an economic development issue.**

According to the Center for Rural Policy & Development, **every region in Minnesota has a shortfall** between the number of children potentially needing child care and the number of spaces available.

This disparity is especially acute in **Greater Minnesota, which saw a loss of 15,377** licensed child care spots between 2006 and 2015. In contrast, the **number of spots in the metro area grew by more than 3,200** over the same time period.

While there is no easy fix, there are proposals this legislative session to address this problem:

Funding for Initiative Foundations to help expand access to quality childcare

HF 2424 (Gunther)/SF 2090 (Nelson) provides \$1.5 million for grants awarded to Initiative Foundations for the planning, coordination, training and education necessary to expand child care access. This proposal is based on a successful pilot program initiated by the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation which helped child care providers with business improvement planning and quality mentoring with an aim toward the goal of becoming rated under Minnesota's Parent Aware Quality Rating System.

Bonding & general fund appropriation for child care facilities

HF 4032 (Gunther)/SF 3578 (Eken) provides \$5 million in bonding and \$5 million from the general fund to provide grants to local governments and non-profits in Greater Minnesota to cover up to 50% of the costs to build, upgrade or expand child care facilities to increase capacity and meet state requirements.

Grants to increase child care availability

HF 3605 (Baker)/SF 3316 (Utke) allocates \$519,000 to the Minnesota Child Care Grant Program, which aims to increase the supply of child care providers to support economic development. In 2017, this program received \$519,000 in funding which created more than 300 new child care slots.





AUSTIN PUBLIC LIBRARY

323 4TH AVENUE NORTHEAST | AUSTIN MINNESOTA

Mobile Hotspot Program



Library Mission



Connecting people with resources to foster literacy, equity and community in a safe, comfortable space.

Digital Equity and Justice



“Closing the digital divide has been a long-term goal for public libraries. We have made significant strides in this area. Public libraries across the country, whether in urban or rural environments, are often a critical lifeline providing high-speed internet access. Many public library systems have begun to address how to facilitate access beyond our walls and service hours by circulating computers, tablets, and Wi-Fi hotspots. These types of innovative and vital services make impacts, big and small, on the diverse communities that libraries serve. But even as access to technology and the internet has increased over the last three decades, digital inequality persists, and is increasing in specific demographics. It persists because just having access to technology doesn’t level the knowledge gap that accompanies the digital divide.”

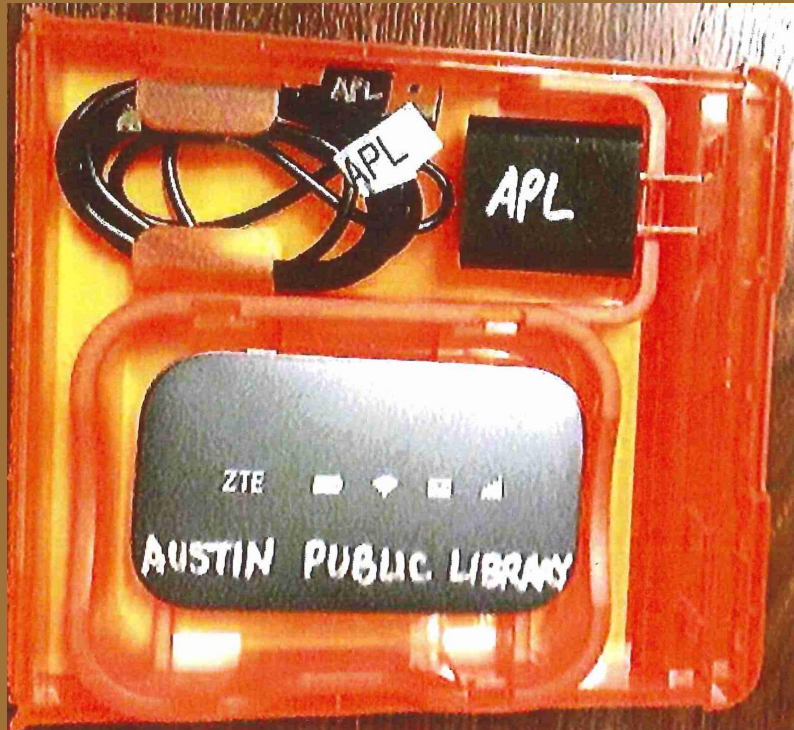
Digital Equity and Justice



“According to the National Digital Inclusion Alliance, digital equity is defined as ‘a condition in which all individuals and communities have the information technology capacity needed for full participation in our society, democracy, and economy. Digital equity is necessary for civic and cultural participation, employment, lifelong learning, and access to essential services.”

-from “Towards a Framework for Digital Justice in Public Libraries”, Public Libraries, Jan/Feb 2018.

What is a Hotspot?



A Wi-Fi Hotspot is a device that allows you to connect your laptop, smartphone, tablet, etc. to the Internet almost wherever you go.

City Goals



The library's Hotspot program aligns with our city goal to enhance the quality of life in Austin for all its citizens. To do this successfully, we need to not only provide Hotspots, but also offer the programs and training needed to allow citizens to make the best use of the technology.

2018 Goal: "Hotspot utilization continues to be a significant draw at the Austin Public Library. Efforts to help narrow the digital divide are important and the Council will continue to work with other community entities to advance doubling the amount of Hotspots for Austin residents."

History of the APL Hotspot Program



- The hotspot program was originally intended as a bridge until Austin's Vision 2020 could develop a more long-term plan for city wide wi-fi.
- The initial target audience members were students, who were provided laptops through the school system, but did not have home internet access.
- In January 2016, Austin was the first public library in SELCO to offer a Hotspot Program. Since then, Albert Lea and Rochester have also acquired hotspots for lending. This echoes a nationwide trend of creating hotspot lending programs for patrons. We continue to receive inquiries from other libraries wanting to develop their own hotspot program.
- To date, the program has been primarily funded through grants.

Program by the numbers



- 125 hotspots in active circulation
 - 75 are requestable
 - 50 are circulated on a first-come basis
- Patrons may check out a device for three weeks. The devices are not renewable. Patrons must agree to hotspot use procedures, annually.
- Only Austin library card holders over the age of 18, with no current fines/fees, are permitted to check out a device.
- Annual cost of the current program is \$45,000-\$50,000 for the data plan alone. This does not include the device (which can cost up to \$200 a piece), storage case, and staff time which ranges from 22 to 25 hours a week for program maintenance.

Usage



- Average usage is 44.95 GB per device per month
- Approx. 2,167 total checkouts per year (17.33 times per device, annually)
- At any given time, 75-80 holds exist for our 75 hotspots that can be requested. The typical wait time is three weeks.
- Devices that are not returned are suspended, providing no usability to the patron. Fines are \$5.00 per day overdue.

What are people saying?



“We live in rural Mower County with spotty internet service speeds, having the hotspot has helped my kids get their assignments turned in via the portal thru the ipads at school.” - Jessie, age 47

“We were able to take it on a road trip over the summer and use it for directions, reviews, finding campsites, everything.” - Mike, age 37

“For me to have access to a hotspot is extremely beneficial...The hotspot allows me to actively work on my school’s class reunion, check my emails and even vote for my grandson when he was up for Mr. Football in Oklahoma!” - Tom, age 78

“It helped with school/college work.” - anonymous, age 22

Where do we go from here?



- There is a demonstrated need for the hotspot program in the Austin community.
- The program is currently dependent on grant funding for the data fees. Potential for expansion for the program is very limited without additional sources of funding.
- What started out as a temporary fix has become a core service offered by the library. As long as the hotspot program is reliant on grants from organizations such as the Hormel Foundation the library is limited in making other requests to allow for continued innovation and development of services to meet the needs of the community.
- Expansion of the program to include more devices beyond the current 125 circulating hotspots will require additional staffing allocation.

Potential



- T-Mobile has offered to provide any additional devices at no cost for the devices (a \$200 per device value) and to maintain the unlimited GB data plan we currently have on any additional devices we acquire. This plan costs approximately \$30 per month per device. T-Mobile may at their discretion, include the first month of data free.
- Local Business' Sponsorship of Hotspots- We could offer annual sponsorship of an Austin Public Library hotspot for \$399/yr. Business's logo, name, website and brief description could be included with the hotspot, as well as listed in a brochure available at the library, and on our website as a hotspot sponsor.

The ASK



- The library is seeking funding to add 75 additional hotspots (bringing the total up to 200) for the second half of 2018, at the cost of \$13,500 for data fees. (Potentially less if T-Mobile gives us the first month of data for each device free.)
- Consider partial or full direct funding of the Hotspot Program in 2019 through the city tax levy. In 2019, our 200 devices would require \$72,000 per year for the data, plus the cost of cases and staffing time (22-25 hours a week).