

Breaking News

Boston blazes ahead with ad-supported muni Wi-Fi project

By [Joni Morse](#)
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WALTHAM, Mass.-Supported by advertising revenue, the city of Boston says its public Wi-Fi project currently provides free Internet access in four commercial districts of the city. The city said the project stands as an example of how advertising-supported Wi-Fi can eliminate usage charges and tax burdens.

The city said its Boston Main Streets Wi-Fi project was created with the goal of promoting economic rejuvenation. The city said the Wi-Fi network will be supported through a combination of donations and advertising revenue. The project is currently being piloted in the Hyde Park; Roslindale; Washington Gateway and West Roxbury neighborhoods. Airpath Wireless Inc., Ascio Wireless and Colubris Networks are deploying the network.

[continued below](#)

"As cities around the nation consider their Wi-Fi options, there is ongoing discussion about the taxpayer burden surrounding metro Wi-Fi deployments," said Wallace Olsen, principal of Ascio Wireless. "Technology partners such as Airpath give us the flexibility to integrate advertising into sign-on and other pages, which generates the revenue to support the project. It's a winning situation for vendors, end users and the city."

Boston's system uses Airpath's WiBOSS Metro platform, which supports subscriber management, provisioning, authentication, authorization, accounting and report generation. Airpath said its partner, Colubris Networks, is supplying access points for the deployment, including several InMotion Multiservice Controllers.

"Boston is a city known for innovation, so it's only fitting that we are introducing cutting-edge wireless technology in our neighborhood commercial districts," said Thomas Menino, mayor of Boston. "Wi-Fi is great for Main Streets because it draws people into the districts where they can meet with neighbors, do shopping and check their e-mail all in the same area. And it provides small business owners with free access to technology that they can profit from."

Boston isn't the only city working on an ad-funded Wi-Fi model. Google Inc.'s offer to provide the city of San Francisco with a free, advertising-funded Wi-Fi network is still being poured over by city officials. The city is considering 23 total proposals from vendors including EarthLink Inc., local wireless broadband startup Feeva Inc. and others.

Last October, Philadelphia chose Internet service provider EarthLink to build and manage its 135-square mile Wi-Fi network. The city plans to offer wireless Internet access to Philadelphians for between \$10 and \$20 per month, depending on their income levels.

Other cities have announced plans to offer municipal Wi-Fi networks including Anaheim, Calif.; Milwaukee; New Orleans; Portland, Ore.; and Tempe, Ariz.