



Legislation Text

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Authorizing the Committee on Public Safety and Committee on Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs to hold joint hearings examining the lack of cell phone connectivity throughout Fairmount Park, which poses a safety risk to park visitors in the event of serious health emergencies or violent crime.

WHEREAS, Fairmount Park, the largest urban park in the United States, is comprised of a sprawling 9,200 acres of parkland and 5,600 acres of woods, streams, meadows and wetlands; and

WHEREAS, The Fairmount Park System receives as many as 7 million visitors per year, due to the attractiveness of its 206 historic properties, 368 athletic fields, 139 picnic sites and 34 miles of waterways. Additionally, Fairmount Park provides an unexpected diversity of wildlife, foliage and landscape; and

WHEREAS, The Fairmount Park System is comprised of 62 parks, including major parks such as Cobbs Creek Park, Tacony Creek Park, Pennypack Park, Franklin D. Roosevelt Park and Wissahickon Valley Park; and

WHEREAS, The estimated number of wireless subscribers in the United States rose from 243.4 million in 2007 to 377.9 million in 2015. This dramatic increase in wireless devices calls for the increase in infrastructure to support these services throughout our heavily trafficked parklands; and

WHEREAS, The current cell phone connectivity within the Fairmount Park System is insufficient. Due to the lack of coverage throughout Fairmount Park's 215 miles of recreational trails, park visitors who have suffered medical emergencies on the trail have not received adequate prompt medical care; and

WHEREAS, Many park users are unable to report instances of crime in a timely manner due to cellular dead-zones within the park. These crimes include assaults, illegal use of firearms, attacks by stray dogs and vandalism of and theft from vehicles; and

WHEREAS, Minimal cell phone connectivity is aggravated by the lack of reference points that are able to be mapped within the park. The chief complaint of park visitors is the reluctance of police response to criminal activity due to the inability of 911 callers to provide a street address or cross intersection. Additionally, there have been several individuals who died from heart attacks while waiting for rescuers to locate them in the park; and

WHEREAS, Information provided by park users suggest that the Philadelphia Police Department and EMS systems are not adequately tied into the help locator system that Parks & Recreation and other City Departments have made great effort to install in various locations throughout the park. This lack of integration greatly reduces the chance of receiving timely help in the event of serious health emergencies or violent crime; and

WHEREAS, Lack of response leads to frustration and a feeling of fear and anxiety in park users, which drives away visitors and makes the park less safe. Therefore, improvement is needed for the health and safety of park visitors, employees, residents, and contractors, and also for the social and economic well being of the City of

Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, In implementing greater connectivity throughout the Fairmount Park System, it is important to strive to protect park resources and values by minimizing the footprint of wireless services and infrastructures, to create a more efficient cell relay system without destroying the parkland; and

WHEREAS, The Fairmount Park System comprises over 10% of the City of Philadelphia. Therefore, it is important to examine the operational effectiveness of wireless communications within the park to ensure that the park is safe for all; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Hereby authorizes the Committee on Public Safety and Committee on Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs to hold joint hearings examining the lack of cell phone connectivity throughout Fairmount Park, which poses a safety risk to park visitors in the event of serious health emergencies or violent crime.