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District launches Smart Lighting Project

Industry Forum marks the beginning of first P3 procurement in the District; will deliver more reliable lighting, save energy, and smart city services like WiFi

(WASHINGTON, DC) – Today, three District agencies launched a project to create a modern streetlight system by hosting an Industry Forum that attracted hundreds of potential partners. The event marks the first significant step in a procurement by the Office of Public-Private Partnerships (OP3). The project is a joint effort with the District Department of Transportation and the Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO) to convert the District’s streetlights to more reliable and sustainable light emitting diode (LED) technology, deploy smart city technology such as free broadband WiFi and remote monitoring of the lights, and to transfer the system maintenance to a new private sector partner through a performance-based contract for greater accountability.

“We are finally delivering the 21st century streetlight system that the District deserves,” said Seth Miller Gabriel, Director of OP3. *“It will not only make us safer, reduce our carbon footprint, and save us money, but we can help close the digital divide and promote innovation in the process.”*

LEDs last 4 times as long as traditional bulbs, require fewer repairs, and provide more consistent light so neighborhoods are well lit and safer. Converting the District’s 71,000 streetlights to LED technology will also save at least 40 million kilowatt hours (KWH) of electricity per year, which is the equivalent of burning 30 million pounds of coal. The new remote monitoring system will allow the lights themselves to notify the District when they are need of servicing so that residents do not have to and will ensure quicker response times.



“Making sure are streets and alleys are well lit at all times is a key component of our Vision Zero goals,” said DDOT Director, Leif Dormsjo. “But, this project not only makes us safer; it also delivers better service to residents in every neighborhood.”

Under this project, the District will leverage its market-leading gigabit fiber network, DC-Net, to transform the streetlight system into a platform for smart city technology. This could include free broadband WiFi, sensors to measure traffic and environmental data, and a host of other uses.

“We are on the precipice of making the District the smartest city,” said Archana Vemulapalli, the District’s Chief Technology Officer. “The benefits of this project will empower thousands who previously had inadequate internet access, make us more economically competitive, and serve as a fertile environment for civic hacking and government innovation.”

OP3’s leadership in the procurement process allows the District to utilize private financing in an unprecedented manner, giving it the ability to deliver the benefits of this project in just 2 years instead of 8 under current budget and planning. It also transfers risk to the private sector so that the District only pays for facilities and services when they work.

“We are crafting a procurement that delivers critical infrastructure faster, cheaper and with less risk,” said Director Miller Gabriel. “Yet we have still managed to maintain unprecedented levels of competition, transparency and collaboration to ensure residents are satisfied with the end results.”

Following the Industry Forum, OP3, OCTO, and DDOT will engage residents and other stakeholders by attending community meetings across the District to get their feedback on what they would like in a streetlight system, before proceeding with the procurement. The Industry Forum is an important step in the process to market the project to potential partners, which will enhance competition, lower costs, and improve the overall quality of the project in the end.

OP3 is charged with building collaborations between the private sector and District government to deliver major infrastructure projects and other public services through long-term, performance-based agreements. The Office was established by the Public-Private Partnership Act of 2014, which was authored by Mayor Bowser, and launched in November 2015. For more information about the Smart Lighting project, please visit op3.dc.gov/streetlights.

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