



**Date:** February 9, 2015  
**To:** Patrick H. West, City Manager *T.W.*  
**From:** Chris Wilding, Interim Director of Technology and Innovation *CPN*  
**For:** Mayor and Members of the City Council  
**Subject:** **Hearing Loop System in Public Facilities Update**

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This memorandum is in response to the December 2, 2014 City Council request for staff to provide the estimated cost to install a hearing loop system in all public meeting rooms located in City facilities. It presents the potential cost to install hearing loop systems in public meeting rooms located in our police stations, senior centers, public libraries, and Council Chambers.

### **Background**

A hearing loop, also known as an induction loop or T-loop, is an assistive listening system that provides a magnetic signal to the telecoil that is located in most modern hearing assistance devices. The benefit of the system is that the telecoil receives the sound signal directly, resulting in a clear audio signal without the background noise that is common with other types of hearing assistance devices.

There are several manufacturers that provide hearing induction loop systems, and all of them use similar methods of delivering the signal to the user via a loop. The loop, itself, is a copper wire that is installed in a room, usually on the floor, that will surround the audience. The signal coming from the hearing loop must be strong enough to allow adequate coverage, as the only indicator of a loop system is signage that notifies the user that a hearing loop system is available. Depending upon the type of hearing assistance device, the user may need to select the telecoil by using a switch on their device.

Technology and Innovation Department staff met with several vendors that are integrators of the hearing loop technology. Based on these meetings, staff determined that there are three system types (small, medium, and large room systems) that could be used to add the hearing loop technology to the City's community meeting rooms. The system types are based on the size and density of the seating in the facilities. Once the system types were determined, Technology and Innovation staff reached out to the departments with public meeting rooms to determine the number of meeting rooms citywide. There are approximately 68 community meeting rooms in the City that could potentially have the hearing looped technology installed. Below are the approximate number of City meeting rooms based on the size of the system required:

Department	Small	Medium	Large	Totals
City Council Chambers			1	1
Fire	2		1	3
Health	8	8	2	18
LBGO			1	1
Library	11	1	1	13
Parks	2	6	20	28
Police		4		4
Total # of Rooms	23	19	26	68
Cost per room	\$4,000	\$12,000	\$32,500	
Seating Capacity	Up to 30	30 to 60	Over 60	
Total Estimated Costs	\$92,000	\$228,000	\$845,000	\$1,165,000

The estimated cost of the various room sizes are \$4,000, \$12,000, \$20,000 to \$45,000 (\$32,500 average). The actual costs could vary significantly depending upon the type of construction (wood frame vs. metal frame), the type of flooring and the type of seating in the meeting rooms. Staff developed an estimated cost per room in order to develop a preliminary estimate of potential costs. Based on these estimated costs per room, the costs to implement the technology in the 68 public meetings rooms, which would include City Council Chambers, would be approximately \$1,165,000.

There would also be ongoing maintenance costs to support the hearing loop technology. If the technology is implemented across the City in the 68 public meeting rooms, staff estimates that the annual support costs would range from \$116,500 to \$233,000 (10 to 20% of the implementation costs) per year. These are estimates and would be dependent upon the amount of support the vendor would provide directly to users. For example, if the vendor provided an 800 number for users to call to answer questions, less staff time would be required. These variables would be clarified during a Request for Proposal (RFP) process.

### Conclusion

Installing a hearing loop system in City facilities that are used for public events would be beneficial for the hearing impaired population. Should the City Council choose to move forward, a RFP would need to be issued to knowledgeable hearing loop vendors to complete the necessary analysis, and to provide a quote for equipment and labor to install the hearing loop technology in the specific meeting rooms that have been identified by the City departments. In addition, the vendor would provide estimated ongoing maintenance and support costs for their specific

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technology, as well as any individual user technical support. The responses to the RFP would provide more precise cost estimates. A funding source would then need to be identified for both the one-time cost for installations and the ongoing costs for maintenance and support.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

ST:dcm

cc: Tom Modica, Assistant City Manager  
Charles Parkin, City Attorney  
Laura Doud, City Auditor  
Department Heads