

2014 Seattle City Council Statement of Legislative Intent

Ready for Notebook

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16	1	A	1

Budget Action Title: Review alternatives for improving the listening system in the Council Chambers and Bertha Knight Landes Room

Councilmembers: Clark; Godden; Rasmussen

Staff Analyst: Ben Noble

Date		Total	SB	BH	TR	RC	TB	NL	JG	SC	MO
	Yes										
	No										
	Abstain										
	Absent										

Statement of Legislative Intent:

Consistent with its commitment to transparency and improved access to City Government, and ensuring that the City Council Chamber and Bertha Knight Landes room are ADA accessible, the Council is interested in improving access for the hearing impaired who wish to participate in Council’s legislative processes and other civic dialogues. Council requests that facilities staff from the Department of Finance and Administrative Services work with representatives from the Department of Information Technology, the Legislative Department and the Seattle Commission for People with Disabilities to review alternative approaches to providing an improved listening system in the Council Chambers, the Bertha Knight Landes Room and potentially other City facilities. The Council is seeking recommendations regarding what are the most effective technological approaches to enhance the listening experience of the hearing impaired. Acknowledging that budgets are inherently limited, the Council is focused on taking the best approach to investing City resources and prioritizing needs for a phased implementation to key facilities.

Background

Over the past year, Legislative Department staff have been investigating the possibility of installing a wireless “loop” technology system in the Council Chamber that would provide a direct listening channel for individuals who use electronic hearing aids. This emerging technology provides a localized broadcast on a frequency that is compatible with many hearing aids. As first presented, this appeared to be a cost-effective approach (\$25,000) to providing enhanced access to City Council meetings and civic dialogues. Further research determined that installation and full implementation in both Council Chambers and the Bertha Knight Landes Room could cost as much as \$475,000. Of this total, roughly 10% covers the cost for the “loop” technology, while the rest is for the temporary removal and replacement of built-in furniture and the permanent replacement of carpeting. In the context of such a significant investment, additional research would be prudent to determine the most appropriate and cost-effective solution.

Responsible Council Committee(s): Government Performance and Finance

Date Due to Council: June 30, 2014