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Philly Considers Wireless Internet for All - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2004/9/1 21:22

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PHILADELPHIA - For about $10 million, city officials believe they can turn all 135 square miles of Philadelphia into the world's largest wireless Internet hot spot.

The ambitious plan, now in the works, would involve placing hundreds, or maybe thousands of small transmitters around the city Â— probably atop lampposts. Each would be capable of communicating with the wireless networking cards that now come standard with many computers.

Once complete, the network would deliver broadband Internet almost anywhere radio waves can travel Â— including poor neighborhoods where high-speed Internet access is now rare.

And the city would likely offer the service either for free, or at costs far lower than the $35 to $60 a month charged by commercial providers, said the city's chief information officer, Dianah Neff.

"If you're out on your front porch with a laptop, you could dial in, register at no charge, and be able to access a high speed connection," Neff said. "It's a technology whose time is here."

If the plan becomes a reality, Philadelphia could leap to the forefront of a growing number of cities that have contemplated offering wireless Internet service to residents, workers and guests.