



HOUSING AND URBAN ISSUES

Chattanooga Is One of Two Cities to Join Smart City Alliance

Two U.S. cities were chosen to participate in a global initiative to test new technologies and policies for a more sustainable and equitable cityscape. Also joining in the pilot project is San Jose, Calif.

December 01, 2020 • **Dave Flessner, Chattanooga Times Free Press**

(TNS) — Chattanooga, Tenn., has been selected as one of only two U.S. cities in a new global initiative to use broadband connections and data to plan and utilize energy, transportation, health care and communications in a more sustainable and equitable manner.

During its Smart City Expo World Congress last month, the World Economic Forum announced that Chattanooga and San Jose, California were picked among three dozen cities around the globe to pilot adoption of new technologies being developed by the G20 Global Smart Cities Alliance.

Chattanooga, which bills itself as "Gig" city for its citywide high-speed broadband, and San Jose, the home of Silicon Valley and some of America's biggest technology companies, are "pioneer cities" expected to try out policies detailed in the Smart Cities Alliance road map.

The international effort builds on the Smart Cities Community Collaborative, a research partnership launched in Chattanooga two years ago by the Enterprise Center, CO.LAB, the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, Erlanger Health System and EPB. Chattanooga has been using EPB broadband connections to

study everything from traffic congestion to energy consumption to identify ways to improve transportation and reduce energy demand.

Kevin Comstock, the Smart City director in Chattanooga's Department of Transportation who is working with the G20 Global Smart Cities Alliance, said Chattanooga's broadband infrastructure and its collaborative approach to encouraging entrepreneurship and research has gained the attention of the world.

"We are just at the kickoff point with our first meeting (of the G20 Smart Cities Alliance) on Wednesday, but I think this has tremendous potential for the future and underscores the recognition that Chattanooga is getting around the globe as a technology-oriented city with a lot of potentials to implement innovative ideas," Comstock said. "There is also much we can learn from the global perspective of this alliance."

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A recent analysis from Frost & Sullivan projects that smart cities will spend an estimated \$327 billion by 2025 and could spur up to \$2.5 trillion in business opportunities in the next five years with the right policies in place.

"Smart cities will focus on data-driven and connected infrastructure, which will lead to higher adoption of technologies like AI (artificial intelligence) and 5G," said Malabika Mandal, the visionary innovation group industry analyst at Frost & Sullivan. "They will prioritize more digitalized services and a strong data analytics infrastructure, leading to increased spending toward technology."

Mandal said the coronavirus pandemic, while primarily a health crisis, has also disrupted urban life and infrastructure and underscored the need for the type of data smart cities can collect and use.

"Smart technologies offer innovative solutions that can reverse the damage and bring some respite, if not normalcy," Mandal said. "For instance, digital contact

tracing can play a critical role in empowering citizens with knowledge of COVID-impacted areas and promote safer urban movement."

The G20 Smart Cities Alliance will work to identify practices that help ensure more universal standards and adoption around the globe with technologies that protect individual privacy and ensure equity and inclusion among all people, Comstock said.

Chattanooga initiated its smart city work in 2010 when it became the first U.S. city to offer fiber optic internet throughout EPB's 600-square-mile service territory. EPB developed the high-speed broadband system as an outgrowth of its effort to build a smart, more controllable power grid.

In 2013 working with the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga's (UTC) Center for Urban Informatics & Progress, the city of Chattanooga deployed an advanced traffic signal system, and later added its smart city office in the city's transportation department.

The Chattanooga Area Regional Transportation Authority (CARTA) has also worked on a number of smart tech programs with the U.S. Department of Energy and Vanderbilt University. At EPB, researchers from the Oak Ridge National Laboratory are looking at micro-grid programs, smart building energy mandates and solar field development, among other studies using EPB's smart grid network.

"The palette is infinite for smart city activities," Comstock said.

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