

Imagine if the City of Sacramento wanted to encourage greater use of electric vehicles and reserved entire streets lanes in wealthier parts of town for use only by Tesla drivers, but not other electric cars. That's similar to the seemingly bad deal the City Council will consider on Tuesday to give away thousands in potential lease revenue in exchange for the promise to develop "5G" technology.

Not only do such 5G standards not yet exist, but the City would essential hand over potential revenue (leases of 2k to 4k, per pole per year) for something the company would be building anyway. With no promises to build out in poorer or more rural areas of town, and a likely pattern of cherry picking wealthy neighborhoods by carriers.

Worse yet, it appears the Mayor is also actively urging members of the State legislature to pass Senate Bill 649 (written by Verizon and AT&T lobbyists). That law would allow noisy (cooling fans) cabinets the size of refrigerators, diesel back-up generators, and large clusters of antennas on new/existing poles on the sidewalk, in front of almost any home in California; unless of course you live in a gated community.

The proposed law would not only gut common-sense noise, design, or placement standards (boxes and antennas on poles a few feet from your bedroom window). It would also essentially giveaway use of a City or County's streetlights for a few hundred dollars a year and prohibit a City for asking for fiber-optic cable sharing (used to connect antennas to the network). Gutting funding and fiber-sharing requests would just make it harder for California cities to build out free (and net neutrality compliant) public Wi-Fi to help kids do their homework or serve transit and park patrons.

In fact as another telco carrier (Mobilitie for Sprint) battles various California cities and counties to put up 120 foot tall poles on sidewalks in front of homes or businesses, SB 649 would appear to gut any common sense rules on design (avoiding the "Blade Runner" look on California streets), height limits, smart siting, or even avoiding placing equipment cabinets in a location where it could displace a small business on a month-to-month lease, or block use of a roof deck for rent-controlled renters.

While the Sacramento deal does include some public Wi-Fi (and likely free advertising kiosks for Verizon on City streets), if Verizon controls the system and the FCC guts net neutrality (as it is poised to do); it is not clear if Verizon could throttle (slow down) Wi-Fi speeds for T-Mobile/MetroPCS or other users.

The Sacramento deal touts a fiber-optic backbone, but no open access standards appear included to allow for competitive access. New York City, and others have been left short-changed by Verizon's promises to build out fiber-optic networks to homes and businesses. This deal appears to lack any real safeguards, and shortchanges Sacramento taxpayers for a system the carrier would build anyways. The City should go back to the drawing board, and should also oppose SB 649, which is an example of a dumb State law impeding the building of Smart Cities.

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