

**DIVE BRIEF**

# More than 100 mayors sign Cities Open Internet Pledge

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Kristin Musulin  
Senior Editor

*Taylor McKnight/Smart Cities Dive*

**UPDATE, May 2, 2018:** New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio recently announced that 110 mayors — representing more than 25 million people — have signed the Cities Open Internet Pledge to defend net neutrality. The mayor noted it as an “important milestone in our fight against the Trump Administration’s attempt to strip away” net neutrality, and is encouraging more cities to sign the pledge.

“Cities must continue to join together to protect an open internet for all of our people in the face of reckless deregulation,” he said in a statement.

City residents have also become involved by utilizing the Mayors for Net Neutrality website to call on their mayors to join the initiative. A full list of the mayors that have signed the pledge can be found on the site.

**Dive Brief:**

- During a panel at South by Southwest (SXSW), New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio announced the Cities Open Internet Pledge, a commitment to “take all available steps to ensure the internet

remains open and to keep gatekeepers from throttling, blocking or limiting government content on the internet.”

- By signing the pledge, cities commit to only procure internet services from vendors that treat all internet traffic equally. De Blasio additionally called on cities to “name and shame” the internet service providers (ISPs) that do not follow net neutrality.
- Seventeen mayors and city leaders have since joined de Blasio in signing the pledge: Mayors Steve Adler of Austin, TX; Ted Wheeler of Portland, OR; Ethan Strimling, Portland, ME; Mark Farrell of San Francisco; Jacob Frey of Minneapolis; Sly James of Kansas City, MO; Sam Liccardo of San Jose, CA; Ron Nirenberg of San Antonio; Catherine Pugh of Baltimore; Barney Seney of Putnam, CT; Paul Soglin of Madison, WI; Steve Schewel of Durham, NC; Tom Feldkamp of Boulder, CO; Pauline Cutter of San Leandro, CA; Lucy Vinis of Eugene, OR; and Chair Zach Friend of the Santa Cruz, CA County Board of Supervisors.

### **Dive Insight:**

The pledge has added a number of signatories since it was announced just a few days ago, and momentum behind the movement is expected to continue. In fact, this is not the first time that mayors have come together to object to the Federal Communications Commission’s (FCC) decision to repeal net neutrality, which was voted on in December. Shortly after the vote, 68 mayors and city officials signed a letter calling on FCC Chairman Ajit Pai to reconsider the decision.

Since then, action has been taken on the state level to reverse the FCC’s decision as well. Earlier this month, Washington became the first state to sign a law blocking ISPs from interfering with net

neutrality, and a California senator just introduced a bill that would go beyond Obama-era net neutrality protections and ban ISPs from “zero rating,” or “exempting certain content from data limits,” according to Wired.

De Blasio’s pledge has clearly drawn attention from local leaders around the nation, as well as digital leaders overseas, including Theo Blackwell, London’s first chief digital officer. Blackwell told Smart Cities Dive he’s interested in further exploring the “bold moves” made in the U.S. regarding net neutrality.

“Although we have a different regulatory climate in the U.K., we should have the same civic concern on those debates as in the U.S. and I really applaud the really bold moves of de Blasio and other mayors to actually make that statement to ISPs and to intervene in essentially a national discussion,” Blackwell said. “It is really important to us. So we’ll be exploring that further, the applicability within Europe.”

London Mayor Sadiq Khan gave a moving keynote speech at SXSW regarding how politicians and policymakers must take action in the wake of the tech revolution to ensure equitable opportunities, noting that governments must “mitigate against the potentially negative impacts of disruption ... to drive up standards and to create more just and equal societies.” The Cities Open Internet Pledge is a direct example of this mitigation, and with growing support, could become a cornerstone movement of the tech revolution.

By building confidence in local governments and enabling mayors and city leaders to have a strong, effective voice in the face of adverse federal leadership, initiatives like this net neutrality pledge will likely inspire more local action down the road.