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## **New York Report Studies Risks, Rewards of the Smart City.**

*The New York Office of the State Comptroller commissioned an informational report on the deployment of new technologies in cities statewide, highlighting innovative efforts and the importance of strong cybersecurity.*

The New York state comptroller tasked his staff with analyzing the deployment of new technologies at the municipal level while cautioning local leaders and the public about cyberthreats.

New York Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli [announced the report](#), *Smart Solutions Across the State: Advanced Technology in Local Governments*, during a press conference last week in Schenectady, which was featured in the [25-page document](#) for its deployment of an advanced streetlight network.

“New technologies are reshaping how local government services are delivered,” DiNapoli said during the announcement. “Local officials are stepping up to meet the evolving expectations of residents who want their interactions with government to be easy and convenient.”

The report showcases online bill payment for people to resolve parking tickets, utilities and property taxes; bike-share programs using mobile apps to access bicycles in downtown areas; public Wi-Fi through partnerships with telecommunication companies; and more.

Yvonne Martinez, assistant director of operations in the Office of the State Comptroller’s (OSC) division of Local Government and School Accountability, said the comptroller charged her and her staff with educating municipal leaders on methods to modernize local government. Martinez said the team focused on what cities had implemented or were in the process of deploying, regardless of geographic location or demographics.

“Over the past several years, we knew there were different types of local governments moving in the direction of adapting newer technologies to improve the lives and experiences of their citizenry,” Martinez said. “We thought this was the perfect opportunity to do some of the leg work for local officials and help them understand what the lay of the land is in New York, and, more importantly, what does that mean in terms of additional risk that they might have to deal with should they pursue some of these types of programs.”

She said staff wrote the report to be accessible and comprehensible for New York residents and lawmakers. Researchers described projects in layman’s terms and steered away from complex technical terminology, she said.

“It’s one thing to highlight it as informational — this is going on around the state — versus this is absolutely a project that we know was perfectly executed and has a stamp of approval from the comptroller’s office,” Martinez said. “That wasn’t our goal. Our goal was more informational: Here’s what’s going on around the state. It’s a challenge because if the comptroller is speaking to these matters, some people might assume otherwise. We tread very carefully.”

The modernization of communities across New York could create possibilities for partnerships

between municipalities, counties and the state, she said. The report details how a city might attempt to emulate some of the projects included. Martinez said local government leaders should collaborate and share best practices if they decide to innovate their jurisdictions in similar ways.

But Martinez warned that interconnected infrastructure comes with new risks that cities need to be prepared for. From the conception of the report, OSC staff meant to dovetail their findings with a cautionary message about cyberthreats, she said.

“We always intended to include that because this is something that’s been going on for years,” she said. “We knew that this report would have to have a dedicated discussion on the risk. In the run-up to the release, we were reminded that those risks aren’t going away.”

OSC has found common cybersecurity weaknesses during its audits of IT systems, such as a lack of data security policies and plans, unsecured networks that could allow unauthorized access, and IT access logs that haven’t been reviewed internally, according to the report.

“That’s a part of our ‘tread carefully’ message: The more data you collect about and on your community, the more at risk you are and your community depends on you to protect their data,” Martinez said.

GOVTECH

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