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**GOVERNOR PATRICK, CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION
ANNOUNCE MASSACHUSETTS WILL RECEIVE \$45.4
MILLION IN FEDERAL STIMULUS FUNDS TO EXPAND
BROADBAND ACCESS IN WESTERN AND NORTH-CENTRAL
REGIONS OF STATE**

*Patrick-Murray Administration commits \$26.2 million in matching funds,
bringing total investment to \$71.6 million*

BOSTON – Friday, July 2, 2010 – Governor Patrick and members of the Massachusetts Congressional delegation today announced the Commonwealth has been awarded \$45.4 million in federal stimulus funding to expand broadband access in Western and North-Central Massachusetts. The Patrick-Murray Administration worked closely with federal and state elected leaders to help secure this significant federal award, which will support long term economic growth, improve health care and education and strengthen public safety throughout the region.

“Expanding broadband access has been at the forefront of our economic development agenda since day one,” said Governor Patrick. “I cannot overstate the value of this project for the communities of Western and North-Central Massachusetts that have gone without reliable high speed broadband service for too long. We are extremely grateful to the Obama Administration and our Congressional delegation for supporting this critical initiative and look forward to putting these funds to work immediately so that the businesses, hospitals, classrooms and households of Western and North-Central Massachusetts can connect to and take active part in a 21st Century economy.”

The federal stimulus funding was awarded to the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI), a division of the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative, through the highly-competitive second round of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration's (NTIA) Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP). Governor Patrick has long advocated for broadband expansion in unserved and underserved communities. Thanks to the leadership of the Patrick-Murray Administration on this critical economic development issue, the Commonwealth will be providing \$26.2 million in matching funds, bringing the total investment in the project to \$71.6 million.

"Our administration has remained committed to finding solutions to deliver broadband service to the unserved and underserved communities in Massachusetts," said Lieutenant Governor Timothy Murray. "We are thankful to the Obama Administration and our Congressional delegation for their continued leadership to expand this service, and we look forward to applying these funds to better serve the residents and businesses in the Western and North-Central regions."

"This wasn't easy and it didn't happen overnight. I remember sitting with our state legislators and business leaders in 1998 talking about how to wire Western Massachusetts for the future. Some people said it was a pipe dream, and now we've proven them dead wrong. We've been fighting a long time to make this day a reality for Western Massachusetts and I couldn't be happier. This is history-making. Broadband service is essential to the region's economic future. Our businesses and our kids will feel the legacy of this network for decades to come. Secretary Locke, Governor Patrick, Congressman Olver and our state leaders were great partners every step of the way and I was proud to champion this effort in Washington. Now, after so many meetings, phone calls, letters and a public plea in the Small Business Committee, this is one huge victory for western Massachusetts. Together with the OpenCape grant we won last year, we can safely say that Massachusetts will have blanket broadband coverage within the next few years, and I couldn't be happier," said Senator John Kerry.

"Today, in the four western counties of Massachusetts, there is only one city block in the city of Springfield that can house a broadband intensive business. This puts the entire region at a major economic disadvantage. I am thrilled to announce that with this award, *Massbroadband 123* will change this," said Congressman John Olver.

"The \$45 million federal investment announced today will bring high speed internet access to more than one million people in western Massachusetts, thousands of businesses in the region, and hundreds of community organizations. It will create jobs and help strengthen our local economy. With this broadband technology expansion, the people who live in the 123 unconnected communities will see their quality of life dramatically improved, and their towns will finally bridge the digital divide. This is extraordinarily good news for Hampden, Hampshire, Berkshire and Franklin Counties," said Congressman Richard E. Neal.

“This is terrific news for many small communities, including Princeton,” said Congressman James McGovern. “If we are to compete in the 21st Century economy, we need to provide our businesses and schools with access to the best technology.”

The MBI’s project, *MassBroadband 123*, will create a robust, fiber-optic network that will connect 123 communities in the western and north-central regions of the Commonwealth. By expanding broadband services to unserved and underserved communities, *MassBroadband 123* will build an essential foundation for these areas of the state. Expanded broadband connectivity will enable residents and businesses to better compete in the 21st century global economy. Businesses in the regions will be more adequately equipped with the tools necessary to grow and to improve their services, and educational institutions will be able to provide the enhanced curriculums necessary to cultivate a highly-skilled workforce.

“The MBI is looking forward to bringing affordable, quality broadband access that will improve the lives of residents and put an end to the digital divide in Western and North-Central Massachusetts,” said MBI Director Judith Dumont. “I would like to thank the Patrick-Murray Administration and all of our partners, including the Commonwealth’s Information Technology Division, the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security, the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, the Department of Conservation and Recreation, state and federal leaders, community groups and stakeholders for their tremendous support and dedication.”

MassBroadband 123 will be a critical component of Governor Patrick’s initiative to expand broadband access across the Commonwealth. In 2008, the Governor signed the Broadband Act into law, creating the MBI and providing capital funding for broadband-related infrastructure projects. *MassBroadband 123* will construct approximately 1,100 miles of new fiber-optic cable to connect homes and businesses, as well as community anchor institutions, including community colleges, public safety institutions, hospitals and libraries. The proposed service area covers over one-third of Massachusetts.

The MBI developed *MassBroadband 123* in close collaboration with the state’s Information Technology Division and the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security. These agencies are committing a total of \$6.2 million to help build the network, and provided significant expertise to develop the *MassBroadband 123* application.

The MBI’s network will also contain 55 miles of fiber-optic cable that was deployed along I-91 from the Vermont border to the Connecticut border through the MBI’s partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT). This \$5 million project will be a key component of the greater *MassBroadband 123* network.

MassBroadband 123 will be a publicly owned, open access, middle-mile backbone that will allow last-mile service providers to connect and deliver broadband services to households and businesses. The backbone will place fiber as close to population and business centers as possible, and will allow last-mile providers to connect at virtually any point of the network.

For more information on *MassBroadband 123*, please visit www.massbroadband.org.

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