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MASSACHUSETTS BROADBAND INSTITUTE ANNOUNCES GRANT AWARDS TO ADVANCE LAST- MILE BROADBAND SOLUTIONS

Over 1,000 residences will gain high-speed Internet access through the grant awards.

Westborough, MA (June 29, 2011) – The MBI today announced \$335,000 in competitive grant awards as part of ongoing efforts to advance last-mile solutions and expand broadband connectivity in underserved areas of Massachusetts. The grants from the MBI’s Last-Mile Broadband Solutions Program will help municipalities and broadband service providers to deploy new high-speed Internet access in the western and north central parts of the state. Providers will use a wide array of broadband technologies and utilize existing infrastructure, and eventually *MassBroadband 123*, the MBI’s 1,338 mile Internet backbone network that will extend broadband access to over 120 communities in western and north central Massachusetts.

“Investing in last-mile solutions is a key part of the state’s plan to extend broadband access and create economic opportunities,” said Secretary of Housing and Economic Development Gregory Bialecki. “The expansion of broadband connectivity is a critical component of the Patrick-Murray Administration’s initiative to support job growth and spur innovation across the Commonwealth.”

“The grant awards are part of the MBI’s commitment to connecting the unconnected,” said MBI Director Judith Dumont. “Through this funding we are energizing municipalities, broadband service providers and other organizations to both deploy immediate broadband solutions and to start planning now, in advance of the *MassBroadband 123* network build.”

The grant recipients were selected through an open, rigorous and highly-competitive process. The MBI funded broadband planning and deployment grants up to a maximum of \$50,000 per provider and project, supported by a 25% funding match from the grant recipient. The following municipalities, broadband service providers and organizations received grants:

Broadband Planning Grants:

- The town of Leverett, in collaboration with Crocker Communications, will receive \$40,000 to plan a Fiber to the Curb network, serving all 640 homes in the community.
- The town of Royalston will receive \$11,250 to design a wireless network to serve the community.
- The organization WiredWest will receive \$50,000 to further develop their broadband network design and business model that will serve 47 communities in western Massachusetts.

Broadband Deployment Grants:

- WiSpring, an Internet service provider, will receive \$44,000 to deploy a wireless network to provide access to approximately 185 homes in the town of Tyringham.
- GAW High-Speed Internet will receive \$40,000 to deploy a wireless network in the town of Ashfield to provide access to approximately 200 customers.
- AccessPlus will receive \$50,000 to deploy a new wireless network to service 170 homes in Savoy and surrounding communities.
- The town of Warwick will receive \$50,000 to expand and upgrade its wireless network to reach 400 more unserved homes in town.
- The town of Princeton, in collaboration with Ayatch Wireless, will receive \$50,000 to expand its wireless network to reach 100 more customers.

The broadband planning grants were designed to fund the development of market studies, business plans, network engineering and designs, and other actions needed to develop and implement last-mile broadband solutions. The broadband deployment category funds providers who will acquire and install broadband equipment to expand last-mile services using the **MassBroadband 123** network, as well as existing infrastructure before the network is complete. Both grants are critical to help leverage investment by broadband service providers and extend broadband connectivity in the region.

The **MassBroadband 123** network will be open access to allow broadband service providers to connect and offer service, which will increase competition, affordability, and service options. The MBI signed an agreement with Axia NGNetworks USA (Axia) to serve as the network operator for the **MassBroadband 123** network. Axia will provide wholesale services to broadband service providers on the **MassBroadband 123** network and maintain and refresh the fiber-optic network to ensure its operability and efficiency.

About the MBI

The Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI) is working to extend affordable high-speed Internet access to all homes, businesses, schools, libraries, medical facilities, government offices and other public places across the Commonwealth. Governor Patrick created the Massachusetts Broadband Institute, a division of the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative, when he signed the Broadband Act into law in August 2008. The Act gives the MBI the authority to invest up to \$40 million of state bond funds in necessary and long-lived infrastructure assets, such as conduits, fiber-optic cable and wireless towers. For more information on the MBI, please visit www.massbroadband.org.