

THE MASSACHUSETTS BROADBAND INSTITUTE'S CALL FOR SOLUTIONS

Responses to Call for Solutions Inquiries

SPECIAL NOTIFICATION REGARDING THE SUBMISSION OF QUESTIONS TO THE MBI'S CALL FOR SOLUTIONS

The Call for Solutions (CfS) has generated a great deal of interest and many thoughtful questions. The following steps have been implemented in response to and in support of achieving the best possible exchange of ideas:

- Beginning on November 5, 2008 questions and answers regarding the CfS will be posted as they are finalized, so check this site frequently for updates.
- The deadline for questions to the Call for Solutions has been extended to November 21, 2008.
- The deadline for the submission of Solutions to the Call for Solutions has been extended to December 19, 2008.

Questions and answers will be posted as they are completed. Several of the questions the MBI has received are so similar in nature that they have been aggregated into one question. Some questions need to be clarified and the MBI will reach out accordingly. Some questions require subject matter expertise (e.g., legal expertise regarding state procurement laws) and thus the answer may be delayed. In some instances the MBI will identify a previously posted question and answer. The MBI is appreciative of the time and consideration taken by those who have submitted questions. The MBI is making every effort to answer and post responses as quickly as possible. The MBI anticipates taking additional steps in support of encouraging the best possible exchange of ideas.

Q1: Can the MBI hold information confidential as part of the Call for Solutions process?

A1: As stated in section 1.11 of the Call for Solutions (CfS): "All Responses will be made publicly available on the MTC website www.masstech.org." The CfS is distinct from a Request for Proposals and is designed to inform the development of policy regarding the processes to be used to formulate public-private partnerships, as opposed to determining the outcome of such processes. That said, the MBI believes it may entertain requests for confidential treatment of specific information that is appropriately considered proprietary or trade secret and that will assist in the development of policy and therefore needs to be contained within a CfS response. Under Massachusetts law, the MBI has the discretion in certain circumstances to protect such information from public release. The MBI will be releasing a confidentiality policy statement shortly. This statement will describe the

limited circumstances under which the MBI may agree to hold specific information confidential, the procedure to be followed to reach such an agreement, and the procedure to be followed to submit the information that is the subject of such an agreement.

Q2: How does the MBI define the term “underserved”?

A2: Currently, the term “underserved” refers to a town-level survey conducted in June 2007 by the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative. In this context, underserved refers to a community in which some portion (less than 100%) of the citizens do not have access to broadband Internet service. As the MBI moves forward with broadband assessment surveys and mapping, it will have the ability to more precisely determine the locations (homes, businesses, etc.) where service is not available. We expect that the term “underserved communities” will be supplanted by the term “unserved citizens” as we more precisely map broadband service availability at the sub-town or address level.

Q3: Has the \$40 million set forth in the MBI’s enabling legislation been funded yet?

A3: The MBI’s enabling legislation authorizes up to \$40 million to be used by the Massachusetts Broadband Incentive Fund in connection with the deployment of affordable and ubiquitous broadband for every citizen of Massachusetts. As many familiar with the state’s legislative and budgetary process already know, the establishment of a dollar number in a piece of legislation does not automatically mean that it will be funded – there are many capital outlay programs authorized by law that are not part of the annual capital spending plan. The most important thing, now that we have the authorization in place via the Broadband Act, is for the broadband program to be included in the official five-year capital spending plan established by the Executive Office for Administration and Finance (A&F). The good news is that this is indeed the case, and the \$40 million in general obligation bonds has not been impacted by the cuts made elsewhere in the state budget due to declining revenue projections. In his fiscal action plan announced on October 15, Governor Patrick specifically said that, as long as the market for our capital bonds remains available to Massachusetts, we will continue our investments in broadband expansion, among many other important infrastructure projects consistent with the Commonwealth’s capital plan.

At the MBI’s first board meeting on October 3, the first fiscal year operating budget was approved (approximately \$1 million, covering planned expenditures through June 2009). It is not contemplated that infrastructure investments will be made by the MBI before June 2009, since such expenditures will be made pursuant to a formal RFP to be launched in spring

2009 (after the Call for Solutions for western Massachusetts is complete). We anticipate drawing down, via A&F, additional funds available via the MBI's \$40 million general bond allocation over the next few years, as the MBI identifies strategic infrastructure investments to be made that can result in the achievement of its goals.

Despite the recent economic turmoil and declining state revenues, Governor Patrick is steadfast in his commitment to delivering broadband access to all citizens of the Commonwealth and continuing to invest in our future.

Q4: Does the Commonwealth intend for the combined public-private broadband system developed as a result of the RFP to be financially self-sustaining?

A4: Yes. The intent of the incentive fund is for the Commonwealth to absorb sufficient up-front capital expense to enable commercial providers to recoup the remaining costs of providing broadband service in sparsely populated regions of the state.

Q5: Does the MBI expect to recoup its (up to) \$40M investment? How do you account for social good in the equation? For example, politicians talk about investing in our roads and bridges. What I don't hear is that if they invest in broadband, roads and bridges will see less use and need less maintenance in the long run (this round of repairs is desperately needed) and people working from home will be more productive and able to address family needs which in turn reduces medical costs, another issue of national concern... the educational benefits of giving more students access to broadband from home changes the dimensions of our education system and might begin to bring us up to par with other countries... Where/when do these aspects fit into a new equation?

A5: Governor Patrick, the Massachusetts Legislature, and the board and staff of the MBI have a comprehensive understanding of the benefits universal broadband service could bring to the Commonwealth. As the question points out, these benefits include increased telecommuting and associated positive impacts on the environment, decreased load on the state's transportation infrastructure, and improvements to education and health care. These kinds of public benefits – as well as improved business competitiveness, more reliable public safety communications, and more efficient local government communications – are considered in the determination of the Commonwealth's return on its investment in broadband.

The bonds behind the incentive fund are "general obligation" bonds which will be paid back out of general state funds, rather than "revenue" bonds which would require the project at hand to generate funds sufficient to repay the

entire capital expense. The MBI may, however, also provide for revenue streams connected to some or all of its investments, including but not limited to, lease or license fees to be paid by the partners utilizing the assets funded by the MBI.

Q6: Has the RFP been released by the MBI? When is the release expected?

A6: No. The MBI is now in the process of developing an overall procurement structure or process in which the RFP is expected to be released within the next six months.

Q7: How does the MBI define “broadband” and what safety concerns should communities have regarding the technology?

A7: The term “broadband” is used to describe a high capacity connection between computer users and the Internet. It can describe a number of technologies, including copper telephone wire (DSL), coaxial cable (cable modem), fiber-optic cable or a variety of wireless technologies. These technologies can all coexist in the same areas, giving consumers a choice of competing providers. The MBI remains neutral at this time as to which technologies will be utilized to deliver service to consumers.

All installation of broadband will adhere to applicable industry, state, and federal standards, including safety codes.

Q8: What services and assets will the RFP attempt to procure?

A8: The MBI intends to invest its capital alongside the risk capital of one or more partners. We expect that a variety of network technologies (e.g. wired vs. wireless), topologies, and business models may be supported by different potential investments of the MBI’s funds. Examples of the kinds of assets the MBI may invest in include fiber-optic transport links, wireless towers, or installation of last-mile conduits. The RFP will provide the basis for all interested parties to articulate their specific proposed solution and the required public investments associated with it.

Q9: How will the RFP process ensure that universal broadband coverage is achieved?

A9: The MBI is chartered with the goal of closing broadband gaps in the Commonwealth. The first step along that path is to identify the details of where those gaps are. Toward that end the MBI is currently developing an assessment methodology (utilizing Geographic Information System, or GIS, technology) that will pinpoint broadband coverage gaps by address. It is expected that the results of this assessment will be reflected in the RFP.

Therefore, responses to the RFP can be evaluated based on how thoroughly their proposed solution addresses the identified broadband gaps.

Q10: Will broadband fall under the authority of the Massachusetts Department of Telecommunications and Cable (DTC)?

A10: The Massachusetts Department of Telecommunications and Cable (DTC) does not have the authority to set the prices, compel the deployment, or regulate the quality of retail broadband service. The creation of the MBI does not change this aspect of telecommunications law.

While the Commissioner of the DTC serves as one of five *ex officio* members of the 9-member MBI board, the MBI remains separate from the DTC in its mission, funding, and structure. The MBI operates as a division within the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative, a quasi-public agency.

Q11: Who will pay for maintenance of the infrastructure that is funded with the MBI's investments?

A11: The MBI expects that private sector participants will be financially and operationally responsible for the end-to-end operation of network solutions. This may include managing, upgrading, and maintaining the assets that the Commonwealth or another public entity will own.

Q12: Is the project timeline on page four of the Massachusetts Broadband Incentive Fund - Briefing Document still accurate?

A12: The relative timing of events available in the MBI Briefing Document is accurate. However, this document was produced when legislation to form the MBI and the Incentive Fund was introduced in August 2007. Since the legislation was not signed into law until August 2008, the MBI expects the overall timeline shown in that document will be shifted out by 12 months.

Q13: Does the MBI have access to licensed or quasi-licensed spectrum (2.5 GHz or 3.65 GHz)?

A13: No.

Q14: Is there a requirement for Public Safety applications?

A14: The MBI's enabling legislation states that the objectives of the Institute shall include promoting robust broadband access for essential state and local government services including, without limitation, public safety, health and education. While the MBI envisions investing in lasting broadband infrastructure that best facilitates the delivery of broadband for these and many other purposes, the MBI does not envision that RFP respondents will

have to meet the more rigorous standards that might be required for a network dedicated *exclusively* to the needs of public safety.

Q15: Are there requirements to run video over the network?

A15: The MBI requires that households and businesses receive "broadband Internet" connectivity. However, it should be noted that broadband service is part of a high-speed, IP-enabled network that can deliver video and voice services in addition to Internet access. The Institute will consider all proposals that provide at least broadband service and will factor additional services into the overall proposal evaluation.

Q16: Can funding from the Massachusetts Broadband Incentive Fund be used for building infrastructure for "Last Mile" technologies?

A16: The MBI is not restricted as to "where" in the overall network architecture it makes particular investments. Rather, the useful lifespan of an investment and its contribution to the overall system value will be more important determinants of investment decisions. The MBI intends to invest in lasting broadband infrastructure that best facilitates the delivery of broadband through an economically sustainable business model.

Q17: What level of performance (speed, throughput, uptime) will the MBI require of the broadband infrastructure in which it invests?

A17: The MBI will be seeking the best performance obtainable given the funds it has available to co-invest with partners. One purpose of this Call for Solutions process is for the MBI to start determining what levels of performance may be realistic to expect.

Q18: How will creating ubiquitous broadband access encourage economic competitiveness and growth?

A18: Numerous studies have demonstrated positive linkages between broadband availability and economic indicators including the rates of business formation and job growth, as well as property values. Broadband is now essential to the location decisions of most firms and many families. Therefore, making broadband available will make currently unserved regions of the Commonwealth more attractive destinations for businesses and residents alike.

Q19: Will the MBI invest up to \$40 million to build out a "fiber optic backbone network" designed to cover the unserved and underserved areas of western Mass., and will the MBI negotiate, plan and contract for deployment of "last mile" networks with one or more private sector firms to connect the MBI's backbone to all the unserved/underserved

areas and thus to bring broadband service to individual residences, businesses, schools and municipalities?

A19: This is one possible model. Other models may also be proposed. The MBI will consider all possibilities.

It should also be noted that the MBI was created to achieve the deployment of ubiquitous, affordable broadband across the Commonwealth. There have been no final allocation decisions made with regard to the upcoming RFP. It is expected that any final award will not utilize the full \$40 million, with respondents competing on the basis of the value they provide the Commonwealth for entering unserved markets.

Q20: Does the pursuit of a regional solution mean smaller partners will be precluded from participation?

A20: No.

Q21: Is it commonplace in public-private partnerships for the private partner to be responsible for maintaining the infrastructure that the Commonwealth owns? What is an example?

A21: This practice is quite common. For example, the Commonwealth owns a railroad on Cape Cod for which a private party is given the right to use this asset for its own purposes, but it must operate and maintain this asset at its own cost.

Q22: Can the MBI fund the make-ready costs associated with deployment of cabling attached to utility poles?

A22: The MBI funds can pay costs associated with the assets procured by the fund. For example, if the MBI were to invest in fiber deployment that required pole attachments, the make-ready costs associated with those attachments would be part of the MBI's investment. However, the MBI cannot pay costs associated with assets separately procured by partners.

Q23: Can the MBI's funds be used to lease equipment or assets rather than purchase them outright?

A23: The MBI may fund the construction, purchase, and/or installation of critical broadband infrastructure. However, any broadband infrastructure (equipment or other property) financed by the MBI must be owned by the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative, the Commonwealth, or one or more public entities. The MBI may lease property it finances to non-profit or for-profit private sector entities for use by such entities in the provision of service(s).

Q24: If needed, will the state assist in obtaining access to a tower or pole?

A24: Pursuant to the MBI enabling legislation, the MBI expects to support the needs of broadband service providers by working in collaboration with other agencies and entities for the purpose of maximizing opportunities for the expansion of broadband access. This includes identifying existing assets, expediting the permitting process for access to various rights-of-way, towers, utility poles, or other relevant assets.

The MBI is confident that the imperative created by the Governor's newly enacted broadband initiative will motivate agencies and other entities to support efforts to bring broadband services to unserved citizens throughout the state. These ambitions, however, do not minimize the responsibility of winning applicants to achieve the access needs represented in their proposal.

Q25: What assistance may be available through the MBI to assist respondents with the Call for Solutions and RFP process?

A25: Over the next few months, the MBI will be completing efforts to fully staff the Institute and establish a complete board of directors based on the appointments of Governor Patrick. The MBI staff is happy to answer questions from all stakeholders seeking to assist in the process of formulating the best structure to elicit the most effective proposals to fill broadband gaps in Western Massachusetts. The Call for Solutions is part of that process and the MBI hopes the answers to questions posed through the iterative Call for Solutions will assist respondents who plan to submit responses to the RFP.

Q26: How will the MBI garner specific and informed recommendations? Can you give an example of how the CfS process will inform the MBI's role in this process?

A26: The Act establishing the MBI requires that the Institute act as an investor in broadband infrastructure on behalf of the Commonwealth. To this end, the CfS process will help determine an optimal role for the Institute that leads to the most cost effective and highest return strategic investments.

Specifically, the CfS is intended to identify organizations that are capable of implementing proposed solutions targeting the lack of broadband in western Massachusetts. The CfS and the subsequent steps in the solicitation process must identify organizations that are adept at leveraging additional private and public investment.

Responses to the CfS will be used to develop and execute the process needed to make investments in western Massachusetts. This process will also help identify potential partners and interested parties, and the insights will be incorporated into reports and planning documents.

Q27: What is Berkshire Connect's role in the future development of the broadband initiative?

A27: The MBI recognizes and appreciates the hard work, dedication and commitment of all regional groups and stakeholders and we hope to work with those regional stakeholders that share the Institute's mission to connect unserved citizens in western Massachusetts. Where Berkshire Connect is an independent entity, the MBI does not intend to dictate a specific role for Berkshire Connect and comparable organizations in the deployment of broadband to unserved citizens. Rather, the MBI hopes that local non-profits and municipal governments will continue in their historical roles of demand aggregation, negotiations between the community and the private sector, and serving as clearing houses for information that assists both residents and commercial providers alike. Such assistance and information will be essential to the success of this initiative.

Q28: Will "The Unserved Communities Project" (UCP, 2006 by the "Connects") be considered along with the recommendations of participating private sector firms?

A28: Absolutely. The results of all related studies will help the MBI get to work more quickly by assisting in the development of a comprehensive broadband investment strategy. The Institute plans to utilize results and best practices from a variety of local and national studies, initiatives, and projects to make informed investments that best serve the interest of the Commonwealth in bringing broadband to unserved citizens of western Massachusetts.

Q29: Is there a minimum size (sq miles or other metrics) that define a "region" in the MBI's pursuit of regional solutions?

A29: There is no minimum size of a regional solution. Potential solutions could very well involve more than one region. Such analysis will be informed by the CfS process and defined by our understanding of where broadband access is lacking and where the MBI will need to build out and invest in infrastructure.

Q30: Given the geography and population density of Western Massachusetts, is it realistic to assume that cost of installation and service pricing will be consistent with the markets in eastern Massachusetts?

A30: The MBI's capital investment will be used by providers to defray the increased costs associated with serving a region such as western Massachusetts. The MBI will provide capital specifically so that broadband providers CAN offer pricing and bandwidth consistent with those offered in eastern Massachusetts

Given the geography and population density of western Massachusetts, there are market impediments to the private sector, on its own, deploying broadband service comparable in quality and price to that of eastern Massachusetts. The application of state funds can make a difference in overcoming these obstacles.

Q31: How realistic is it to expect companies to make significant capital investment, maintain and upgrade infrastructure owned by the Commonwealth, and to reinvest without participation or support from the Commonwealth?

A31: Please refer to Question #11 from the first round of CfS responses.

Q32: What are the mechanisms in place for western MA residents to provide input?

A32: The CfS process alone includes a number of opportunities for interested parties to participate in the process. For example, on November 12, 2008, the MBI held a conference call for interested parties to address any outstanding issues. The conference call served as an important opportunity for stakeholders to participate in a direct dialogue with the MBI to further inform the development of broadband access solutions. Additionally, the MBI will be holding a free public forum on December 4, 2008 in Northampton, MA to address key questions submitted prior to the CfS deadline and provide another opportunity for public participation.

Further, the MBI and its selected vendors will be engaging with the towns and counties within which infrastructure is being deployed as necessitated by each town's permitting procedures. These processes all allow for the public to attend and comment.

Q33: How will the MBI ensure that system maintenance and repair is addressed in a timely fashion?

A33: The MBI has not selected a specific business model yet. As mentioned in the last round of CfS questions, in all scenarios, the MBI expects that private sector participants will be financially and operationally responsible for the end-to-end operation of network solutions. This may include managing, upgrading, and maintaining the assets that the Commonwealth or another

public entity will own. Maintenance, repairs and timeliness will be considered as part of discussions surrounding contract negotiations upon selection of private partners through the RFP process.

Q34: Does every respondent need to offer a solution for deploying broadband infrastructure? Can respondents offer to provide various data services and applications?

A34: Respondents can submit whatever level of detail they feel is appropriate, and they can offer any solution, including specific broadband applications. With that said, an important goal of the CfS is to identify organizations that are capable of offering and implementing proposed solutions and adept at operating sustainable business models which leverage public sector investment.

Q35: Has the recent FCC ruling on opening access to 700MHz spectrum to broadband providers changed the MBI's preferences toward solutions?

A35: The FCC ruled that it will open a large chunk of previously unusable spectrum, commonly referred to as "white space," for use in a variety of applications, including lightly-licensed wireless broadband. It will take a while for the details of this decision to be assimilated by industry. The MBI views the FCC's ruling as a very positive development and expects that some respondents may look to leverage this spectrum in their proposed solutions. Nevertheless, the MBI will not pre-select or prioritize solutions at this stage. The CfS is itself designed as a preliminary tool for potential partners to help inform the MBI as we start to think about viable solutions and develop an RFP with specific criteria and goals based on those potential solutions.

Q36: A recent Wall Street Journal article stated that IBM has been hired to develop broadband over power line (BPL) in conjunction with a number of rural electricity cooperatives. BPL will enable these coops to provide high speed Internet service. How does this development coincide with the MBI's work in western Massachusetts?

A36: There are many technologies available for use in the deployment of broadband infrastructure. The MBI will consider all of the technologies proposed by respondents, including BPL. That said, there are no rural electricity cooperatives operating in Massachusetts, so the particulars of the contract described in the news article do not have any direct connection with the MBI's efforts in western Massachusetts.

Q37: Can MBI help introduce vendors to potential partners?

A37: The MBI held a public forum on Thursday, December 4th at the Clarion Hotel in Northampton, Massachusetts from 9:00am-12:00pm for respondents to meet one another as well as to gather input from the vendor community. In this early stage, the MBI hopes to foster partnerships through these forums and during the CfS process. Other than these specific opportunities, the MBI is not chartered to take an active role in the creation of such partnerships. Further, once a formal RFP is been released, there would be legal constraints, imposed by the Commonwealth's procurement laws, upon the MBI's involvement in forming such relationships.

Q38: At what point does the MBI think it will be able to produce the RFP?

A38: The MBI is currently planning to have a formal procurement process underway within the next six months.

Q39: Is there a way for e-rate entities to form a consortium to submit a bid to supplement building out the backbone of the broadband network?

A39: Entities currently serving e-rate locations, such as schools and libraries, should respond to the CfS. Although the universal service and e-rate programs do not address the lack of universal availability of commercial broadband infrastructure in a community, a partnership or consortium of e-rate entities could aggregate demand and make it easier for the MBI and its selected vendors to engage with e-rate entities in the area. We welcome responses to the CfS that help the MBI quantify the aggregate level of demand from consumers, businesses, and public institutions, including e-rate entities as well as assist the MBI to identify other opportunities to leverage other resources to advance the deployment of broadband service.

Q40: What kind of reimbursement could towns expect from the MBI for any work they perform on the make-ready of poles and rights of way?

A40: MBI funds will not be used to reimburse towns for particular expenses or costs. Instead, MBI funds will be used to finance the acquisition/construction of broadband infrastructure (equipment or other property) through a formal Request for Proposals. Entities awarded contracts through the procurement process may incur costs for "make ready" charges or fees and/or rights of way expenses related to the deployment of broadband infrastructure to be financed with MBI funds. Such costs would, presumably, be included/reflected in the amounts to be financed with MBI funds.

Q41: When creating a plan and selecting technologies, is the MBI reviewing appropriateness of line-of-sight technologies in mountainous and heavily-forested areas of western Massachusetts, which are often hostile to wireless technologies?

A41:

The intent of the Call for Solutions is to identify vendors and approaches that have the potential to provide broadband to unserved citizens of western Massachusetts in partnership with the MBI. During the RFP process, the MBI will evaluate each bid based on criteria that will likely include among other elements, the technical, financial, and performance characteristics of the proposed solution, which would include the performance of any proposed wireless technologies in the mountainous and heavily-forested areas of western Massachusetts. Wireless networks have already been successfully deployed in some areas in western Massachusetts, as well as areas in Vermont and New Hampshire with similar topological constraints to the western Massachusetts region. Ultimately, the MBI will be relying upon all applicants to validate the appropriateness of line-of-sight technologies and will hold applicants responsible for representations made within their proposal.

Q42: How does MBI plan to weigh the tradeoffs between a solution that includes a robust, but potentially expensive, fiber network and a solution that relies primarily on lower bandwidth, but less expensive, wireless networks?

A42:

The MBI will be seeking the best performance obtainable given the funds it has available to invest. There are a multitude of technologies capable of delivering broadband connections through all of the tiers of the network. Each technology has tradeoffs in cost, longevity, speed, and quality of service. The MBI expects that responses to the Call for Solutions will describe/propose technologies suitable to provide broadband service in western Massachusetts, as well as the expected performance characteristics and constraints of such technologies. The MBI will publish its findings from the CfS and use them to inform its subsequent RFP process.

Q43: Will the infrastructure investment the MBI is contemplating provide sufficient excess capacity for future upgrades to end user bandwidth without the need for replacing MBI's infrastructure?

A43:

The MBI intends to invest in assets with physical and technological life spans of significantly longer than ten years. It will also look to invest in assets that can be upgraded rather than replaced, e.g., towers and fiber. Providers can

change radio technology on towers and electronic equipment on fiber optic cable to upgrade their respective capacities without replacing the underlying asset.

During the RFP process, the MBI will evaluate responses based on various criteria, including the longevity of the assets that respondents propose for investment. The MBI expects that private sector participants will bear financial and operational responsibility for the end-to-end operation of network solutions. This may include managing, upgrading, and maintaining the assets that the Commonwealth or another public entity will own.

Q44: With respect to the MBI's investment in infrastructure, and given the bandwidth requirements to deliver any level of connectivity that could be termed "broadband," is there any technology other than fiber optic cable that is plausible for building such an infrastructure?

A44:

There are a multitude of technologies capable of delivering broadband connections through all of the tiers of the network. The MBI remains neutral at this time as to which technologies will be utilized to deliver service to consumers.

Q45: We understand that Berkshire Connect and Pioneer Valley Connect recently completed a survey of broadband availability and adoption. Are the results of this survey available to the public?

A45:

In December 2007, Berkshire Connect, Inc. and Pioneer Valley Connect (the Connects) launched the *Regional Broadband Survey*. Designed with input from various local and state partners and funded as part of a Regional Priority Grant from the John Adams Innovation Institute with matching funds from Berkshire Connect, Inc. and the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, the purpose of the survey was to better define unserved areas of western Massachusetts and to demonstrate the region's demand for broadband. The survey was conducted online through SurveyMonkey.com and distributed, in paper form, by local broadband groups and town officials in participating western Massachusetts communities.

Approximately 5,000 survey responses from 86 towns were submitted. Additional Western Massachusetts data collected from the *Commonwealth Broadband Survey* distributed during the same time period by the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative was consolidated with the Connects' survey data. Currently the Connects are aggregating the results of all survey responses received and preparing a summary that will be provided to the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI) and posted on the

MBI and Connect websites by December 31st. Individual town results have been compiled and are available from the Connects.

Q46: According to the MTC website a “beta-test program piloting Wi-Fi networks in three communities” has been completed. Are the results of this beta-test available to the public?

A46:

In September 2006, Berkshire Connect, Inc. and Pioneer Valley Connect (the Connects) were awarded a Regional Priority Grant from the John Adams Innovation Institute (JAI), a division of the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative. Through this award, along with resources provided by Berkshire Connect, Inc., the Connects conducted a Beta Test Program (BTP) of wireless networks that were installed in areas in Florida, New Salem, and Worthington.

The Connects are currently developing a set of available options and recommendations for each community to maintain the broadband access after the BTP ends. These recommendations will be incorporated in a final report outlining the entire BTP and its results. This report, which is anticipated to be completed before February 2009, will be presented to the MBI and posted on the Connects' websites.

In advance of the final report, more information about the status of the Beta Test Program and the technologies deployed is available through Sharon Ferry of Berkshire Connect, Inc. (413-496-9606 or sferry@bconnect.org) or Jessica Atwood of Pioneer Valley Connect (413-774-1194 x101 or jatwood@frcog.org).

Q47: Some underserved towns are experiencing difficulty in getting cable operators to agree to expand broadband service to areas in our towns where there is currently no cable or broadband service. The uncertainty associated with the MBI's investment may be acting as a disincentive in negotiations for towns with areas not completely served by their existing cable franchisees. What should towns in this situation do?

A47: If necessary, the Department of Telecommunications and Cable can provide assistance to towns with their franchise negotiations. For example, the DTC can meet with the negotiating parties for informal mediation of the disputed issue and to ensure that the guidelines for initiating a license as well as license renewal are being met. However, the DTC does not have the authority to require that cable operators agree to build-out requirements.

Further, it is important to note that one of the goals of the MBI is to condition the market for the very types of investments that the above question is

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concerned with. The intent of the incentive fund is for the Commonwealth to fund sufficient broadband infrastructure investments to enable commercial providers to provide broadband service in sparsely populated regions of the state that would otherwise prove unprofitable for providers to invest in. In other words, while the MBI may indeed be adding uncertainty to the franchise renewal process, without the MBI, the request for expansion of coverage may simply have been refused outright.