



Congressman Richard E. Neal speaks at Monday's announcement of the broadband expansion of the *MassBroadband 123* network. At left is Judith A. Dumont, Director of the Massachusetts Broadband Institute.

## **Springfield to partner with Massachusetts Broadband Institute on MassBroadband 123 high-speed Internet**

By Jim Kinney, The Republican  
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SPRINGFIELD – The city of Springfield will allow the Massachusetts Broadband Institute to thread a 21st century communications network through a network of underground conduits dating back to the days of trolley tracks on Main Street.

It's all part of MassBroadband 123, a \$71.6 million-project aimed at bringing high-speed Internet to 120 communities in western and north central Massachusetts, said Judith A. Dumont, director of the Massachusetts Broadband Institute.

The project is being funded with \$45.4 million in federal stimulus funds received in July 2010 and \$26.2 million in state funding.

Dumont said high-speed Internet is not a luxury in today's business environment.

"Try applying for a job without the Internet," she said. "Try running a small business with a slow connection."

She expects the project, which will be completed by 2013, to create 400 construction jobs.

Once in place, the high-speed Internet will provide service up to 1,000 times faster than what might be available in some towns now. Dumont expects that high-speed service to create as many as 2,900 jobs through economic development around the state.

She spoke Monday afternoon at a news conference with U.S. Rep. Richard E. Neal and Springfield Mayor Domenic J. Sarno held at the Scibelli Enterprise Center at Springfield Technical Community College Technology Park.

The facility at One Federal Street is important because it is at the junction of two major telecommunications lines, she said. The Broadband Institute is using the city's "Nothing happens without One Federal Street," Dumont said.

Neal, D-Springfield, worked with U.S. Rep. John W. Olver, D-Amherst, to secure the federal funding. Neal said it's right for the government to step in and create facilities that the market itself will not generate.

"Think of education. Why should a child in the Boston suburbs have access to more electronic data than a child in the hilltowns of Hampshire and Franklin counties?" Neal said.

Dumont said a major goal of MassBroadband 123 is to bring Internet services to rural communities where only outdated dial-up service exists today. But the federal money is also designed to bring more service into underserved urban neighborhoods in cities like Springfield and Holyoke.

Through MassBroadband 123, the Broadband Institute is completing the "middle mile" connection between major trunk lines and "retail" Internet providers that bring service into homes and businesses, be they in Springfield or western Franklin County.

"It's the most difficult and expensive part of the system to build," she said.

But once built, the Institute can sell access to that "middle mile" to any number of retail providers.

"This is designed to bring more competition into the market," she said. "We all know what happens with more competition. Services expand and prices go down."

Work in Springfield will be completed this summer, she said. Major work includes stringing 1,300 miles of line over 30,000 existing utility polls and will not be completed until 2013.

Andrew J. Doty, the city's chief information officer, said the city now uses the conduit to run traffic signals.

The Broadband Institute is part of the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative, a public economic development agency focusing on technology-related enterprises in Massachusetts. The Collaborative also includes the John Adams Innovation Institute and the Massachusetts e-Health Institute.