

Central Mass. towns eyed for broadband

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The state will launch a \$71.6 million initiative to expand broadband access in central and western parts of Massachusetts. Area communities targeted for the project are Athol, Barre, Brookfield, Charlton, Fitchburg, Gardner, Leominster, Lunenburg, New Braintree, East Brookfield, West Brookfield, Petersham, Princeton, Sturbridge, Templeton, Ware, Warren and Westminster.

MassBroadband 123, an effort to create a publicly owned fiber-optic network into 123 communities, will be funded with \$45.4 million in federal stimulus money and \$26.2 million in state money, the state reported today.

The federal money was awarded to the Massachusetts Broadband Institute, a division of the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative.

The state reported about 1,100 miles of new fiber-optic cable will be placed over a service area that covers about one-third of Massachusetts. The fiber will be placed as close to population and business centers as possible, allowing for connections to homes and companies, the state said.