

## Vt. Yankee pipes

More than 40 pipes buried at Vt. Yankee carry radionuclides.

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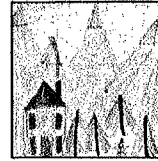
## The Mansion House

This famous Greenfield landmark housed many businesses.

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## No federal cash for western Mass. broadband

### Application failed in first round; disappointed officials to reapply

By RICHIE DAVIS  
Recorder Staff

A federal stimulus application for \$100 million to bring high-speed telecommunication to rural western Massachusetts was rejected

Tuesday afternoon, prompting state officials to reapply for the next funding round.

The money, to have been matched by \$25 million from the state, would have paid for a fiber-optic ring around the four western counties, along

with a series of smaller rings and offshoots to literally every town in Franklin, Hampshire, Berkshire and Hampden counties. The proposed fiber rings, aimed at bringing broadband capability into 33 communities identified under federal guide-

lines as being either unserved or under-served, are designed to make it financially more viable for private telecommunication firms to provide service to homes and businesses and towns.

Massachusetts Broadband Institute, which applied for the federal funds as part of its effort to bring high-speed telecommunications to every town in western Massachusetts, got no expla-

nation from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration why it was among 1,400 rejected applications, and NTIA spokeswoman Jessica Schafer would only say that the request by 2,200 applicants for seven times the amount of available funding was "very competitive."

Judy Dumont, MBI's director, said she was, "Disappointed and certainly

surprised" by the decision, and added that her agency "will absolutely apply for funding again."

This time, though, Massachusetts will likely not apply for funding from Rural Utilities Service, a division of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Dumont said. That's because the western Massachusetts communities

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## ■ Broadband: Small towns need it

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don't fit the department's criterion of "remote" — being more than 50 miles from a metropolitan area.

With new grant rules for the second funding cycle and an application deadline of March 15, Dumont said MBI will look at modifying its application.

The U.S. Commerce Department's NTIA funded \$1.4 billion in projects in Round One — matched by \$1 billion from the Rural Utility Service — and plans to fund \$2.6 billion worth of projects in Round Two, said Schafer.

Also rejected Tuesday were two related applications by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments on behalf of the four western counties under the federal Broadband Opportunities Program. One

stimulus fund proposal would have provided \$3.8 million for computer centers where groups of seniors, school children or other groups could gather to get access to computers and training.

The second, for \$2.9 million, was aimed at increasing use of broadband service by offering workshops or other educational tools to help people make better use of the Internet.

Linda Dunlavy, who is administrator for the COG and a coordinator of Western Massachusetts Connect, said Tuesday, "I'm very disappointed and surprised. We felt we were the poster children for what NTIA was looking for."

With a \$40 million state fund under the Massachusetts Broadband Act, MBI remains committed to bringing high-speed telecommunications

capability to every town in the four-county region for economic growth and educational advancement, said Dumont.

"We had a plan before federal funding, so we're in the process of re-looking at that plan," she said, "and seeing what we can do in 2010 that could help provide broadband in western Mass. in 2010, but also maybe strengthen our application for Round 2. We have teams on dual paths."

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