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PATRICK ADMINISTRATION MOVES FORWARD ON BROADBAND EXPANSION

“Call for Solutions” to tap expertise, investment that delivers broadband access to all citizens

BOSTON – October 6, 2008 – The Massachusetts Broadband Institute today issued a “Call for Solutions” to identify opportunities for public/private partnerships that will help bridge the digital divide in the Commonwealth. Governor Deval Patrick signed the Massachusetts Broadband Act into law in August 2008, allocating up to \$40 million in state bond funding for broadband infrastructure development, with an initial focus on western Massachusetts, where the digital divide is most acute.

“The Patrick-Murray Administration is driving forward on broadband development by engaging the private sector and conditioning the marketplace for the important work to come,” said Secretary of Housing and Economic Development Dan O’Connell. “This exciting next phase will draw out practical solutions from industry and other experts in the region to bring high-speed Internet access to all western Massachusetts citizens.”

At the time the legislation was signed into law on August 4th, 32 Massachusetts towns and portions of 63 more had no broadband service. This leaves thousands of citizens, businesses, libraries, health care centers, and other essential public service providers without the necessary broadband access to function and succeed in Massachusetts’ knowledge-based, information economy. The state’s ability to make targeted infrastructure investments in conduits, fiber, wireless towers and other long-lived infrastructure will leverage additional investments by private companies to deliver complete solutions to customers in regions without broadband access.

Developing and maintaining a dialogue with telecommunications experts, stakeholders and affected citizens around broadband solutions is critical to the success of any public investment in broadband. There are significant challenges, both geographic and economic, that have hindered broadband deployment in western Massachusetts. Solving those and other challenges will require significant collaboration and innovation that fully engage the public and private sectors.

In collaboration with the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development, the Department of Telecommunications and Cable, Berkshire and Pioneer Valley Connect, and the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative, the Broadband Institute will work with companies and other organizations to develop a sustainable business model for the deployment and management of broadband services in Massachusetts.

The Massachusetts Broadband Institute will conduct an open, transparent and thorough process that makes findings available to the public throughout the process. To download a copy of the “Call for Solutions” or to find out more about the Massachusetts Broadband Institute, please visit masstech.org/broadband.

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The Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development is one of seven Secretariats that make up the Governor's Cabinet. Under the leadership of Secretary Dan O'Connell, the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development oversees the Department of Business Development, Housing and Community Development, and Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation.