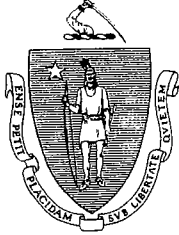


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**STATE UNVEILS \$25 MILLION BROADBAND INCENTIVE FUND**  
*Initiative calls for public-private investments in communities without broadband access*

**BECKET – August 2, 2007** – Delivering on one of its key economic development priorities, the Patrick Administration today unveiled a \$25 million Broadband Incentive Fund designed to make public-private investments in Massachusetts communities without high-speed Internet access.

Joined by state and local officials at Becket Town Hall, Secretary of Housing and Economic Development Dan O'Connell, Department of Telecommunications and Cable Commissioner Sharon E. Gillett, and Director of Wireless and Broadband Development Stan McGee outlined the administration's plan to leverage targeted state infrastructure investments to attract private partners to make complementary investments and provide comprehensive broadband solutions in unserved areas.

"The Patrick Administration recognizes the economic imperative of taking smart steps to close the digital divide that persists in parts of our state, particularly in Western Massachusetts," said Secretary of Housing and Economic Development Dan O'Connell. "Communities like Becket have been in the dark for far too long when it comes to having broadband access. This new fund will help level the playing field in this community and so many others across Massachusetts and pave the way for the economic development and job creation opportunities that go hand-in-hand with being wired for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century."

"I thank the Governor for his commitment and dedication to this important issue," said Representative Dan Bosley. "The implementation of this program is a necessary first step toward ubiquitous high-quality broadband service in the Commonwealth, and I look forward to working with the Administration to ensure its success."

"To be viable and competitive in the information age, we must commit to invest in the infrastructure needed to serve every student, every business, and every home in the Commonwealth. With this announcement we lay the plans to do just that. The ripple effects from this will touch every corner of every community in western Massachusetts," said State Senator Benjamin B. Downing.

Representative Denis Guyer said, "I'm excited to see that the Patrick/Murray Administration is investing in the unserved communities which have been at a economic and cultural disadvantage because of this lack of infrastructure."

The Broadband Incentive Fund will be capitalized by general obligation bonds and managed by a new division within the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative. The fund will enable the state to direct up to \$25 million toward such essential, long-lived broadband infrastructure as conduits, fiber and wireless towers, making it more cost-effective and attractive for private companies to invest additional funds and deliver complete solutions for customers in regions without broadband access. The state will select private partners for these projects through a competitive procurement process.

"The economic benefits of leveling the playing field and giving every community the tools they need to compete in today's knowledge-based economy are substantial," said Commissioner Gillett, an author of a recent study that tracked the measurable link between broadband availability in a community and gains in economic development, job creation, property values and business formation. "A public-private partnership is the most effective way to address the broadband deficit and give the people who need it the most an opportunity to participate fully in today's innovation economy."

Thirty-two towns in Massachusetts currently have no broadband access whatsoever. An additional 63 communities are partially served, with broadband available only in certain areas of the community. All but one of the completely unserved communities, as well as many of the underserved ones, are located in Berkshire, Hampshire, Franklin and Hampden counties in Western Massachusetts.

"Together with the Legislature, the Governor and Lt. Governor have long recognized the economic and educational disadvantages of being disconnected," said Director of Wireless and Broadband Affairs Stan McGee. "The Broadband Incentive Fund will bridge the gaps and open up worlds of information, knowledge and opportunity to the people living in the communities that have yet to experience the transformative effects of broadband access."

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