



BERKSHIRE CONNECT, INC.



October 20, 2006

“Broadband Forums Scheduled”

The leadership of Berkshire Connect, Inc. and Pioneer Valley Connect are pleased to announce an upcoming series of forums about broadband technologies, challenges and opportunities in Western Massachusetts. One of the greatest challenges for advancing economic development in the region is the limited access to high speed internet. One-third of the municipalities in Western Massachusetts have no access to broadband, such as DSL or cable modem technologies. This lack of access also impacts education, public health & safety, government efficiency and more. These forums will discuss issues important to communities underserved in terms of broadband access. All of these forums are free to the public.

“I encourage all interested residents in the communities in Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden and Hampshire counties to attend these forums, especially if they have formed broadband committees to explore potential broadband and wireless solutions for their telecommunication needs,” said State Representative Daniel E. Bosley (D-North Adams), co-chairman of the Legislature’s Joint Committee on Economic Development and Emerging Technologies. “These forums will provide communities with the economic context surrounding underserved communities’ telecommunications needs and outline potential long-term solutions that marry technologies with infrastructure for the unique challenges that surround the cities and towns in Western Massachusetts.”

Representative Stephen Kulik (D-Worthington) stated that "Public participation is a vital part of bringing broadband and wireless service to every community in western Massachusetts. These forums will help us to better define the barriers and identify the best technical solutions to achieving our goal. I hope that local officials and interested citizens will participate in this important work to strengthen the social and economic fabric of our region and each of its communities."

“Access to broadband is a crucial issue to so many of us in the southern Berkshires and surrounding communities.” said Representative Smitty Pignatelli (D.-Lenox) “ I am contacted daily by individuals and professionals seeking the kind of access to wireless technologies that so many other areas of the Commonwealth already enjoy. Broadband access is critical to improving our local economy. I am committed to bringing these technologies to our area and I urge anyone who shares this interest to attend these forums.”

The forum sessions planned are the following:

- **Broadband 101** - These sessions will answer several important questions, such as “Why is broadband important,” “What is broadband and why don’t we have it,” and “What can communities do?”
 - Wednesday, November 1, 2006 from 7 pm – 9 pm at the Greenfield Community College Main Campus in Greenfield. Co-sponsored by the Connects and State Senator Stanley C. Rosenberg and State Representative Stephen Kulik.

- Wednesday, November 29, 2006 from 7 pm – 9 pm in the Hitchcock Room (2nd floor) of the Red Lion Inn, 30 Main Street, Stockbridge. Co-sponsored by the Connects and State Representative “Smitty” Pignatelli.
- **The Underserved Communities Project** – These sessions, co-sponsored by the Connects and the John Adams Innovation Institute, will include a presentation of the findings of the Underserved Communities Pilot Project and the next steps for developing a long-term solution to the problem of underserved communities. In addition, there will be a discussion of short-term solutions to the problem, and an announcement of an opportunity for three communities to participate in a beta test program of wireless technologies.
 - Wednesday, December 13, 2006 from 7 pm - 9 pm in the Community Room of the JFK Middle School, 100 Bridge Road in the Florence section of Northampton.
 - *NEW DATE!* Thursday, January 18, 2007 from 7 pm – 9 pm at the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, 375 Church Street, North Adams.

For more information:

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