

# Joint Statement From The Western Massachusetts Legislative Delegation On The Last Mile Broadband Solution



Today the Western Mass. legislative delegation met with representatives from the Franklin Council of Governments (FRCOG), the Massachusetts Broadband Institute at the MassTechCollaborative, and WiredWest to discuss the next phase of the Last Mile Solution to secure universal high speed internet access to unserved and underserved communities. This collaborative discussion generated a plan and timetable which will begin with regional open meetings held in the coming months by these partners. Through these meetings information and data will be shared with residents and local officials, while feedback is gathered and options are evaluated. The goal will be for each town to consider and adopt a broadband strategy specific to their individual need during their Annual or Special Town Meeting in the Spring.

Senators Benjamin Downing, Steven Brewer, and Representatives Steve Kulik, Paul Mark, Denise Andrews, Peter Kocot, Anne Gobi, and Smitty Pignatelli participated in today's discussion, which was hosted by Senator Stan Rosenberg at the Massachusetts State House.

"Today all of the partners in the Last Mile initiative made great progress in advancing our goal of universal broadband availability in all of our communities," said Representative Steve Kulik.

"FRCOG is pleased to work as MBI's outreach arm in conjunction with WiredWest," commented Linda Dunlavy, Executive Director of Franklin Regional Council of Governments. "The role of FRCOG is to help towns understand their options and facilitate a municipal and regional Last Mile Solution."

"The best way forward to close the connectivity gap is through regional cooperation," said Philip Holahan, Interim Director of the Massachusetts Broadband Institute at the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative (MBI). "We look forward to partnering with the Legislature, Patrick Administration, and community leaders like the Franklin Regional Council of Governments and WiredWest to pursue locally-driven, successful Last Mile broadband connectivity solutions."

"Each organization brings unique and critical assets to the Last Mile effort and WiredWest is very pleased with this new collaboration," said Monica Webb, Chair WiredWest. "We are eager to bring our community

perspective, extensive last mile planning, and governance capabilities to the group effort to accelerate the deployment of high-capacity broadband in the unserved towns.”

“Today’s meeting was another step in closing the digital divide. Working together the MBI, WiredWest, FRCOG, and Western Mass. legislators look forward to maximizing the impact of the \$50 million authorized in the Information Technology bond bill. We have more work to do, but we will be doing it all together, with common purpose,” said Senator Downing.