



March 14, 2016

Dear Honorable Boards of Selectmen, Town Administrators, and Broadband Committee members,

Over the past several months, the Baker-Polito Administration has engaged in a conversation with the Massachusetts Broadband Institute at the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative (MBI) to more deeply understand the broadband expansion strategies being proposed, including diverse approaches from individual towns, companies, and regional organizations. We are working together to ensure that public investments will be sound and will provide their intended outcome: sustainable, affordable broadband solutions which will provide reliable high-speed internet access for many years to come.

We are working together to address the last-mile rural broadband challenge. We support the positive broadband expansion outcomes to date, including the *MassBroadband 123* middle-mile network and Leverett's successful locally-owned network. We also appreciate the hard work of many local leaders to develop proposed projects.

Our goal is to develop and execute a strategy that will provide broadband access to the greatest number of residents possible, access available sources of financing, offer the best value for the public investment, leverage outside sources of funding and expertise where possible, and operate sustainably over time. In order to provide effective return on public investment, the Administration wants to ensure affordability and operating sustainability for projects receiving Commonwealth funds.

To meet this goal, we are asking MBI to develop policies to ensure that it is reviewing and analyzing all options. This process will include review of technologies, cost projections, and various project design and delivery, governance and operating models. The expected result is a strategic plan for MBI to provide cost effective, financeable and sustainable broadband solutions for Western Massachusetts communities.

Specific steps include:

- The MBI is analyzing and developing criteria for approving sustainable operating and governance models;
- The MBI is reviewing available technologies and best practices from the Commonwealth, other states and internationally for broadband access solutions; and
- The MBI is reviewing the plans and options for municipal borrowing and broadband project financing, including the exploration of potential federal loan programs.

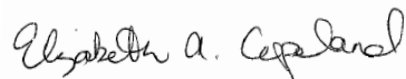
The MBI will continue to proceed with projects where cost effective and sustainable solutions are identified and access to financing is assured, including the broadband extensions program in partially-served cable communities.

We appreciate the hard work of local leaders over many years to explore and develop broadband solutions. We will continue to provide you with information about our progress during this review and the strategic planning process.

Sincerely,



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Cc: Senate President Stanley C. Rosenberg
Senator Harriette L. Chandler
Senator Benjamin B. Downing
Senator Anne M. Gobi
Senator Donald F. Humason, Jr.
Representative Donald Berthiaume
Representative Gailanne M. Cariddi
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