

Monterey Broadband Committee Update: January 15, 2008

Thank you for your interest in the Monterey Broadband Committee's work.

We are currently working closely with other towns in the area; Berkshire Connect; and local, state and federal politicians to come up with viable broadband internet options in Monterey and other underserved areas of Western Massachusetts.

We are very fortunate to have Berkshire Connect to mobilize our collective voices and resources to forward the cause. Berkshire Connect was incorporated in February 2000 to create an advanced telecommunications landscape that would offer affordable and reliable high-capacity broadband services throughout Berkshire County. One of their most important contributions to date is their role in the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI) and the Incentive Fund created in Governor Patrick's \$25 million bond bill, which would make targeted investments in broadband infrastructure in Massachusetts communities without high-speed Internet access. For more information, please see: <http://image.zenn.net/REPLACE/CLIENT/1000052/1000327/application/pdf/BroadbandLegislationExecSummaryFINALOct07.doc.pdf>

We believe broadband access is critical to Berkshire communities for many reasons. It has become a necessity to retain and attract business, from large-scale to home-based. It allows educators and students to communicate and conduct research. Having broadband access is also an issue of public health and safety, as it facilitates communication and the transfer of essential information in cases of emergency, as well as accessing other information by public health and safety officials. For example, without broadband access, Board of Health volunteers often must take time off of work to attend training seminars that could be taken online.

Access to broadband is also more socially and environmentally responsible. It enables municipal governments to complete state and federal reporting requirements efficiently. It facilitates communication between government officials and their constituents, which is particularly important for small towns with limited staff hours. For residents with special needs, such as seniors and the disabled, broadband provides greater access to the world, and better health monitoring opportunities and assistance with independent living. And of course, workers that telecommute reduce travel.

Here are some current and upcoming developments regarding broadband access in Monterey:

Monterey Broadband Committee mails Berkshire Connect survey to residents:

The survey, a joint effort by Berkshire Connect and Pioneer Valley Connect, is designed to gather information that will identify more precisely where high speed internet service exists and, more importantly, where it does not exist. This information will be used to create mapping products that will be critical when working to provide service to unserved areas and will reinforce the inequity between eastern and western Massachusetts. The survey was mailed to Monterey households in early January, but can also be completed online at www.bconnet.org. (bottom right box). Survey responses are due by March 1, 2008.

South County Broadband Committee Chairs to meet with Berkshire Connect; Massachusetts Technology Collaborative (MTC); and the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development (EOHED): At the end of January, the groups are meeting to share information about the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI) and the Incentive Fund created in Governor Patrick's bill.

Public Broadband Forum for Western Massachusetts: This event is being held on Saturday, March 1, 2008 from 8:30 am – 3 pm at the Clarion Hotel & Conference Center in Northampton, MA. Senator John Kerry, Congressman John Olver and FCC Commissioners will be attending. There is no charge for attendance. To register for the Forum, send contact information to burnes@masstech.org.