

11.08.11 Broadband Development and Expansion in Massachusetts

Governor Deval L. Patrick

Broadband Event

Suffolk University, Boston

Tuesday, November 8, 2011

Good morning all. Thank you, Secretary Anthony, for your generous introduction and for your leadership on so many issues, actually, all of the things that she talked about she actually did on behalf of the Administration. So thank you for inviting me here this morning.

I want to acknowledge Commissioner Clyburn, welcome to Massachusetts. Thank you so much for your leadership and to the FCC for taking on the task of modernizing and reforming the Universal Service Fund and making affordable, reliable broadband service for all Americans a priority. We will be right in line, I hope, high in the line, first in the line would be ok too.

I want to acknowledge Senator Ben Downing and Representative Gailanne Cariddi for being marvelous partners on these issues in the legislature. Also, Commissioner Geoffrey Why, thank you and Mass Broadband Institute Director Judy Dumont, thank you.

Ladies and gentlemen, good morning. Thank you very much for having me this morning. As Mignon said when I came in, I was 15 minutes early and no governor is 15 minutes early. This is how we roll.

In today's world, high speed broadband is as necessary an infrastructure as roads, and bridges. It is an educational necessity, an economic necessity, and a competitive necessity. I think we all share this belief, that's why you're here, and fortunately here in Massachusetts, thanks in large part to private investment, many homes and businesses have access to broadband today. But that access is still too far from universal. And we can no more afford to have a community without access to broadband internet than we can afford to have a community without access to a good school or a decent road.

Like I said, we made a lot of progress in Massachusetts over the years with private investment, but government has a role to play here. This is in fact exactly where government should play a role. Government should not be about trying to solve every problem in everybody's life. But it should help people help themselves. Government should and must invest in the things we choose to do together. And investing in things as basic and fundamental as the components of a functioning economy and a functioning community is exactly the role that government should pay.

Broadband access is one of those components. No company is going to move to a town not in 2011 that doesn't have broadband access. No student can be asked to compete on a global stage without broadband access. As we move toward new integrated medical care, access to e-records for doctors will be a basic part of providing quality, customized care. Let alone the more routine day-to-day PTO email chains and grandparents seeing their grandchildren on streaming video and yes, a little time on Facebook.

For all of these reasons my Administration and our partners in the state legislature have made bringing broadband access to those unserved parts of Massachusetts a priority. In 2008, we created the MassBroadband Institute and started investing \$40 million in conduits, fiber optic cables, and wireless towers. In 2009, we laid the 55 mile cable along Rt. 91, in Western Massachusetts I91, to serve as a back bone for the rural areas most underserved. In 2010 we received a federal stimulus grant to construct MassBroadband 123. That investment that will extend coverage to hundreds of thousands of households, 44,000 business and more than one million residents. Just this past summer, we began installation of over 1,000 miles of fiber-optic cable over 35,000 utility poles across the region.

We know our investment will change lives. Like the people in Goshen, where people who want to read their email or search the web come to the public library. Now after hours, that means kids sit in the back seat of their parent's car and do their homework parked in the library parking lot, because that's the only broadband hotspot anywhere for miles. That's why we invest. So children will have access to educational materials at school and at home. So law enforcement officials will have immediate access to criminal justice information system and medical professionals will have access to online databases. So local municipalities will deliver services more efficiently and businesses will be able to better compete in our 21st century economy.

Our commitment to broadband expansion is just one piece of a wider strategy for renewing our public infrastructure: creating jobs today and a platform for future growth. Just as we invest in our physical infrastructure - roads, rails, and bridges - to connect our regions to one another, we invest in our information infrastructure to ensure that our ideas and information can travel just as efficiently from one corner of the Commonwealth to any corner of the globe and back again.

These kinds of investments are why Massachusetts is growing jobs today faster than other states. It's why we are growing our economy more than twice as fast as the national growth rate. Our unemployment rate is well below the national average and falling, and we are coming out of recession faster than most of the rest of the country. This is not by accident. It's because we have pursued a strategy about investing in education, in innovation, and in infrastructure. A strategy we know will not only make us stronger today but stronger for a generation to come.

The kind of success we're demonstrating here in Massachusetts is through discipline of that strategy.

And by the way, it's exactly the reason why the Congress should pass President Obama's Jobs Act. We know these kinds of investments work. That is not a partisan opinion, it's a proven fact. And if you agree with it, get on the phone and on your email and contact members of this do-nothing Congress.

I want to thank you all for your work on this issue. With your help and focus every community, every household and every small business in our Commonwealth will soon be connected. I look forward to continuing to work together in partnership to ensure that Massachusetts leads the nation in broadband connectivity.

Thank you all for being here today.