

## **Baker-Polito Administration Announces \$1.125 Million for Last Mile Broadband Connectivity for Royalston**

*Royalston will build a hybrid wireless network, with a fiber backbone, to provide high-speed internet to over 600 homes, businesses, schools, and town offices.*

**Boston** September 6, 2017 Today, the Baker-Polito Administration announced a \$1.125 million Last Mile Infrastructure Grant Program award to the Town of Royalston, to assist the municipality's efforts to close the broadband connectivity gap for unserved residences and businesses. With today's announcement, a total of 20 towns, representing over 12,000 homes and businesses, have been awarded over \$17 million in funding through this program.

"I am proud of the work our Last Mile leadership team has done to engage communities and support locally driven connectivity projects," **said Governor Charlie Baker**. "Access to broadband internet is helping communities meet their potential to thrive in today's economy and address the growing needs of residents, families and small businesses."

With the Last Mile Infrastructure grant funding and municipal funds, Royalston will build a hybrid fiber and wireless system that will be capable of bringing broadband connectivity to over 600 homes and businesses. Currently, the community has no commercial broadband offering, and the municipally owned system will allow Royalston to pursue 100 percent coverage. This effort follows a successful pilot project in South Royalston, which was previously funded by the Massachusetts Broadband Institute.

"I want to congratulate Royalston's efforts to build a system that meets the needs of their community," **said Lt Governor Karyn Polito**. "Our broadband infrastructure program is driven by our belief that good government is collaborative, and empowers our municipal leaders to pursue projects that support long-term prosperity and success."

"We are thrilled to have assisted 20 towns in Massachusetts to leverage this funding source and pursue municipally-led broadband projects," **said Housing and Economic Development Secretary Jay Ash**. "These projects will significantly expand broadband access in our communities that lack access to commercial high-speed internet, unlocking opportunity for residents and businesses in today's connected economy."

The Last Mile Infrastructure Grant Program now awards towns funding for both professional services and municipal construction, allocations formulated under the Last Mile Program managed by the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI) at MassTech. Previously, professional services funds were held back and expended directly by MBI, on behalf of unserved communities. Under the new grant program, the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development (EOHED) combines these two allocations into a single award, giving Last Mile towns the flexibility to pursue engineering, design and construction solutions for municipally-owned networks directly, as they would with other local infrastructure projects.

“Families and businesses need access to high speed internet. It is great to see the fruits of the pilot program in South Royalston become the foundation for Royalston to get to 100% coverage”, **said Senate President Stan Rosenberg.**

"This grant is another step towards full broadband connectivity for the people of Royalston, and is the result of years of hard work by the community and their representatives in state government, **said Rep Susannah Whipps.** I know the people of Royalston will benefit directly from this grant funding and I will continue to do everything possible to support their efforts."

The program is modeled on EOHED’s successful MassWorks Infrastructure Program, a flexible, competitive grant program that funds local infrastructure projects that unlock economic growth. In addition, EOHED and the MBI will continue to assist municipalities that wish to partner with private broadband providers, or explore alternative solutions.

The Baker-Polito Administration is committed to significantly increasing broadband access under the Last Mile Broadband project. In May 2016, the Baker-Polito Administration introduced a [new Last Mile leadership team](#), and a [new framework](#) to accelerate implementation of broadband projects in unserved or underserved communities by empowering local partners through a more flexible, community-based approach. Since last May, the Baker-Polito Administration has supported efforts to expand broadband coverage to [nine partially served towns](#), secured contracts with private providers to deliver broadband to nine additional towns, supported a range of municipally-driven choices for 25 towns, and continue to pursue solutions in partnership with the remaining towns.