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NATHANIEL W. KARNS, A.I.C.P.
Executive Director

June 13, 2016

RE: MassBroadband123 Network

Attached to this letter you will find a series of maps showing the MassBroadband123 network's middle mile that is deployed within the county. Any business or resident that is located along this fiber line, at some expense, can get a direct tie-in to this the MBI fiber line. We hope that these maps are useful to you as residents and businesses come to you asking about broadband availability. While broadband is not as available in any Berkshire city or town as any of us would like, portions of every Berkshire community do have access to true broadband service and we should take every advantage of that fact. A list of service providers that can access the MBI fiber line can be found online at <http://www.massbroadband123.com/BusinessesandResidents.aspx>. Note that not all of the providers provide service to every community or to businesses or residents.

In 2015, the Federal Communications Commission changed its definition of broadband to over 25Mbps download and 3Mbps upload. This new definition means that DSL provided by Verizon no longer qualifies as broadband, however cable television, such as Time Warner, still qualifies. Time Warner cable lines are shown on the maps, but may be outdated in terms of their locations. There may be other fiber lines shown on your maps, however availability to access those lines is unknown. It should be noted that according to many sources, broadband speeds are expected to be at the gigabit level in the next couple of years, so even the FCC's current definition is not adequate for the future. Based on trials that have been done in a couple of communities in the Berkshires and the inherent technical limits of wireless, hopes by some that wireless technology will eliminate the need for broadband fiber amount to "wishful thinking" and satellite service has proven to be very inadequate and expensive.

A goal of the Sustainable Berkshires Regional Plan is to "Make high-speed internet access available to all areas in the region and support the enhancement of the wireless telecommunications and broadband internet network and enable new economic opportunities." Over the next few months our Regional Issues Committee is going to be taking this topic up as the State efforts to implement last-mile broadband have lagged, although some very recent developments are encouraging.

The lack of broadband affects the attractiveness of the entire region for businesses and home-buyers, as well as the ability to educate students and provide an increasingly broader set of services to residents. In BRPC's recent survey of millennials living in or who have left the Berkshires, the desire to be fully connected was highlighted as something this generation strongly desires. Without broadband access, our region's businesses cannot effectively compete and our regional economy suffers.

For all the reasons cited above, being knowledgeable about the current availability of real broadband and providing information to residents and businesses in your community can be useful to you as public officials. We hope that this information is helpful to you. Full size maps can be found online at www.berkshireplanning.org/reports-and-documents/broadband-maps.

Sincerely,



Nathaniel W. Karns
Executive Director