



## Housing and Economic Development

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### Baker-Polito Administration Announces \$480,000 for "Last Mile" Broadband Connectivity for Alford

Nineteen towns have received Last Mile Infrastructure Grant Program awards totaling over \$16.5 million

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**Boston, MA** – August 17, 2017 – Today, the Baker-Polito Administration announced a \$480,000 Last Mile Infrastructure Grant Program award to the Town of Alford to assist the municipality's efforts to close the broadband connectivity gap for unserved residences and businesses.

With today's announcement there are now 19 towns, representing over 11,000 homes and businesses which have received Last Mile Infrastructure Grant Program awards totaling over \$16.5 million in funding.

"We understand the critical nature of high-speed, reliable internet and its impact on residents and businesses' ability take advantage of our connected economy," **said Governor Charlie Baker**. "We are thrilled at the progress our Last Mile leadership team has made in 15 months as we continue to make progress to connect 19 towns and over 11,000 homes and businesses. We remain fully committed to working diligently to close the broadband connectivity gap for each of the 41 Last Mile communities."

The Town of Alford will also support the project with municipal funding, enabling the town to bring broadband connectivity to a community that is currently unsupported by any commercial broadband offering. Alford's municipally-owned network will extend coverage to over 350 residences and businesses.

"I congratulate the Town of Alford on their commitment to building a new, municipally-owned broadband network," **said Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito**. "Our administration believes we are most successful when we collaborate with our municipal partners -- a belief supported by the tools we provide for cities and towns, like the Last Mile Infrastructure Grant Program, MassWorks and the Community Compact program. We will continue to pursue new opportunities to strengthen those partnerships and resources."

"Access to reliable broadband is life changing for residents and business owners in Alford and all of the Last Mile communities working toward connecting to high-speed internet," **said Housing and Economic Development Secretary Jay Ash**. "Not only does high-speed internet improve economic opportunities but it also boosts the quality of life for those impacted."

"There is no other issue as critical as access to high-speed internet for our small towns for addressing economic development and population growth in western Mass.," **said Sen. Adam G. Hinds (D- Pittsfield)**. "I am very pleased a solution for Alford has been reached."

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.

"This grant award is very exciting for Alford," **said Rep. Smitty Pignatelli (D-Lenox)**. "The citizens of one of the Commonwealth's smallest communities have worked to access broadband for a number of years and this grant helps them finally get close to crossing the finish line. Broadband is not only essential for economic development in the region, but it is also a key form of infrastructure in our twenty-first century information economy."

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.

