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**Sent:** Tuesday, September 8, 2020 9:19 AM  
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**Subject:** [External] Massachusetts Broadband Institute

[External]

Last week the Finance Committee asked for information about the Massachusetts Broadband Institute.

The institute has a website at <https://masstech.org/massachusetts-broadband-institute>. You can sign up there for news and updates.

The institute has a board of directors that include several private individuals and several ex officio seats for state government officials. The board includes designees of the state's administration agency and economic development agency, as well as the telecommunications regulator.

Clicking through to <https://broadband.masstech.org/wifi>, I learned that there have been 26 locations where MBI has recently established emergency WiFi hotspots in municipalities that lack broadband access. The WiFi service was free until September 1, but that may have been extended.

Over the longer term, MBI has a "last mile" initiative which is described at <https://broadband.masstech.org/last-mile-programs>. This program is available to towns lacking service entirely. MBI offers five different organizational "models" for towns, including two that would have private ownership of the facilities. The website describes how MBI will evaluate applications for support. In "Model C," multiple towns would own the facilities, but, unlike Vermont, there is apparently no CUD, only a multi-town contract. Under "Model D," each town operates separately, but MBI says it may be possible to "join a regional model in the future."

I spoke this morning with William Ennen, who is the "Last Mile Liaison" for MBI. Bill was very helpful. He has agreed that if you, Faith, or Chair Cummings, were to call him, he will try to help. I encourage the committee to follow up on this. MBI has had to negotiate with many separate towns, which has greatly complicated the task here, but nevertheless something like 20 towns are building out fiber runs now. It does seem that Massachusetts, in this respect, is well ahead of Vermont. Bill would also be a useful resource in explaining Massachusetts' experience with union districts, how they work or don't work, and how they can best be supported. Bill's telephone number is 413-834-0192.

Cheers,  
Peter Bluhm