

Project Proposal Ranking Request for Comment Result

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Comments Received Requesting the Change of a Project Proposal Ranking

<u>Responding Organization</u>	<u>Project Name</u>
Berkshire Chamber of Commerce	- Pittsfield Municipal Airport Improvement Proj. - Hubbard Avenue Improvements - East Street Reconstruction
Berkshire Creative	- Berkshire Festival
City of North Adams	- Gravel Bank - North Adams Plaza - Old Route 8 Corridor
City of Pittsfield	- Pittsfield Municipal Airport Improvement Proj. - Hubbard Avenue Improvements - McKay Street Parking Garage Improvements - West Street Water Line Upgrade - Regionalization of the City of Pittsfield Wastewater Treatment Facility - Regional North to South Connector (<i>not a project proposal</i>)

Comments Received Speaking In-Favor of a Project Proposal Ranking (*These projects are ranked “medium” or “high” already.*)

<u>Responding Organization</u>	<u>Project Name</u>
Berkshire Mall	- Berkshire Mall/Civic Center/Hotel
WiredWest	- Last Mile Broadband Infrastructure

Project Proponent

Berkshire Chamber of Commerce

Project(s)

Pittsfield Municipal Airport Improvement Proj.
Hubbard Avenue Improvements
East Street Reconstruction

From: [Mike Supranowicz](#)
To: [Dan Sexton](#)
Subject: CEDS
Date: Friday, February 25, 2011 1:51:26 PM
Attachments: [image002.png](#)
[image003.png](#)

Berkshire Chamber Response to Draft CEDS Economic Development Project Prioritization3

The Pittsfield Municipal Airport Safety Improvement Project continues to be a significant project that is currently underway. It appears that many may have downplayed the importance due to the projects ground breaking and forward movement in construction. This project should remain a high priority for the region until completed.

The BJ's Wholesale project will likely draw additional retail to the Hubbard Avenue area, it would seem likely that this project along with the East St project, and its relevance to the William Stanley Business Park, would have remained higher on the lists of importance.

Mike

Michael Supranowicz
President & CEO



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[Upcoming Events](#)

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Project Proponent
Berkshire Creative

Project(s)
Berkshire Festival

From: berkshirecreative@gmail.com on behalf of [Helena Fruscio](#)
To: [Dan Sexton](#)
Subject: Re: CEDS Project Prioritization Comment Request
Date: Wednesday, March 02, 2011 10:31:17 AM

See below in blue.

On Wed, Mar 2, 2011 at 10:00 AM, Dan Sexton <dsexton@berkshireplanning.org> wrote:

Morning Helen,

Please elaborate on the Berkshire Festival proposal within the context of the following six elements:

1) Readiness to proceed from a concept or idea to an actual "on the ground" economic development project. [We are developing the business plan at this time and it will be done by the end of May. At that time the Festival will be ready to launch with the actual event taking place in June of 2013.](#)

2) Availability and current status of other funds that would increase the likelihood of a successful project. [We have secured funding from the Massachusetts Cultural Council, Canyon Ranch, and the Upper Housatonic Heritage National Heritage Area. Additional funds have been committed by the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism and additional funds, such as the National Endowment for the Arts and others will be identified in the finalized business plan.](#)

3) The necessity of the proposed project as a prerequisite to enable, enhance or allow other economic development projects. [This project will have numerous opportunities to have creative individuals, businesses and organization grow their patronage, support, and visitors.](#)

- [According to a 2010 survey of Berkshire Visitors Bureau members, an extension of the high tourism season by 2 weeks and three weekends can be expected to generate around 50 % revenue increase and up to a 30 % increase in FTE jobs in June.](#)
- [Additional research shows that festivals tend to increase the length of the visitor's stay in and around the events creating further opportunities for spending.](#)
- [The audiences generating these revenues will provide new marketing opportunities to sponsors and advertisers. This audience is older with more disposable income to spend on travel, lodging, meals and purchases. Cultural events deliver targeted cultural enthusiasts to corporate, foundation and government sponsors for brand marketing.](#)
- [This opportunity to attract new and returning cultural visitors to the Berkshires would strengthen ties with the area encouraging relocation, second home purchases, job creation and vacations.](#)
- [Proportional increases in room, meals, sales and income tax revenue would accrue to the State of Massachusetts and local governments in the county.](#)

4) Potential impacts or unintended consequences from a project that might have long term detrimental effects. [See #3.](#)

5) Geographical dispersion of projects throughout the county. [The festival will have a presence in every region of the Berkshires and we hope to encourage events and happenings in every city and town.](#)

6) Capacity of those involved with the implementation of the project proponent to actually implement the project. [Berkshire Creative has a proven track record of developing and implementing work to support the creative economy, this would be no different. The potential funding sources are varied and suitable for this project and Berkshire Creative has the capacity to manage and execute this work.](#)

If you have any questions, please let me know.

Thanks,

Daniel J. Sexton, Planner
Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
1 Fenn Street, Suite 201
Pittsfield, MA 01201-6629
Ph: (413) 442-1521 ex. 28
E-mail: dsexton@berkshireplanning.org

-----Original Message-----

From: berkshirecreative@gmail.com [mailto:berkshirecreative@gmail.com] On
Behalf Of Helena Fruscio
Sent: Friday, February 25, 2011 4:00 PM
To: Dan Sexton
Subject: Re: CEDS Project Prioritization Comment Request

Dan,

My only formal comment has to do with the Berkshire Festival which was given a low priority. This program will have significant impacts across the county. Below are the results of our economic impact study and this information should be used in reconsidering the rating of this project:

In the Spring of 2010 Berkshire Creative surveyed local businesses on their businesses and what impact the Berkshire Festival might have on them. Following is an overview of the results: The assumption by Berkshire Creative is that a major festival in a two week, three weekend period would create an economic impact similar in magnitude to July and August.

- According to a 2010 survey of Berkshire Visitors Bureau members, an extension of the high tourism season by 2 weeks and three weekends can be expected to generate around 50 % revenue increase and up to a 30 % increase in FTE jobs in June.
- This is a reasonable conclusion using good judgment about survey results, existing research and knowledge of the elements involved. The figures reflect an expected change for a portion, not the entire month.
- Additional research shows that festivals tend to increase the length of the visitor's stay in and around the events creating further opportunities for spending.
- The audiences generating these revenues will provide new marketing opportunities to sponsors and advertisers. This audience is older with more disposable income to spend on travel, lodging, meals and purchases. Cultural events deliver targeted cultural enthusiasts to corporate, foundation and government sponsors for brand marketing.
- This opportunity to attract new and returning cultural visitors to the Berkshires would strengthen ties with the area encouraging relocation, second home purchases, job creation and vacations.

Project Proponent
City of North Adams

Project(s)
Gravel Bank
North Adams Plaza
Old Route 8 Corridor

Memorandum

TO: Thomas Matuszko, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

FROM: Michael F. Nuvallie, HPC

DATE: March 2, 2011

RE: CEDS Evaluation of Projects

On behalf of the City of North Adams, I certainly appreciate the opportunity to better explain some of the development projects that I had submitted to the renewal of the CEDS, and have enjoyed my participation as a committee member.

To provide a brief introduction, it is a bit puzzling to me in that the City's "Gravel Bank" project, as located on Route 8 (Curran Memorial Highway), was in the top five projects within the entire county as seen in the 2004 CEDS. All of the reasons that made it in the top five priority sites then are still very much evident today, but I suppose it is possible that other projects have come to the forefront that could have better merit, but in no way should this project have received a "low" priority. It is true this site is the alleged new home of a Super Wal-Mart, but until such time as this new building is erected, the fact remains that it is still a "shovel-ready" site that could still be home to a small industrial/commercial park if the Wal-Mart project fails.

Using the above as a platform, there have been two other new synergies that have come to the forefront since the last CEDS that now totally integrate themselves to our "Gravel Bank" redevelopment venue. I had actually highlighted those two projects for inclusion into this CEDS, those being: a) the redevelopment of the "North Adams Plaza", and b) the "Old Route 8 Corridor" redevelopment. In 2004, the North Adams Plaza, although fledgling, was a viable and somewhat busy site, and at that same time, there were no definitive discussions nor plans about upgrading the Old Route 8 connector road (the road just to the west of the plaza that connects back to the Town of Adams at the intersection of Old Columbia Street and Butler Street). It now seems clearer to me that the compilation of these three projects actually make for a much more formidable one, in that it becoming one project. I would like to call this combination the *Route 8 Corridor Redevelopment*. For the reasons just stated, along with the fact that our 2004 "Community Development Plan (CDP)" clearly highlighted the Route 8 corridor as a definitive project for corridor access and management, which is also highlighted in the Town of Adams' plans for Route 8, it makes perfect sense to combine these efforts. As you know, it was the BRPC that was the consultant that developed this new CDP in 2004, and it would be a very nice effort to continue project planning and implementation from previous plans as we move forward.

Thus, I strongly believe the *Route 8 Corridor Redevelopment* brings new life, with much more benefit and regional impact. Revisiting the six CEDS elements, this project looks to:

Readiness To Proceed:

All three of these project components are ready to proceed, all of which significantly affect the Route 8 corridor, which again has been clearly highlighted in previous planning studies. The former "Gravel Bank" portion site is cleared, and is ready for construction, even if Super Wal-Mart is not erected. The former "North Adams Plaza" was just finished being cleared of its massive building in the summer of 2010, thereby leaving a clean site ready for building. The Old Route 8 corridor is ready in the sense that it is a usable throughway type of a street, although not heavily used. In essence, all of these are "shovel-ready."

Availability & Current Status of Funds:

Funding is clearly a problematic issue. Should Super Wal-Mart move forward this year to construction, the former "Gavel Bank" segment is very much a finished product, with new jobs being retained from its other local venue, but most likely an upwards bump in new jobs due to the size of the venue as a "Big-Box" store. Marketing and development of the former "North Adams Plaza" piece is also problematic, as prior negotiations with the developer that would make this site a home for a new Lowe's home improvement center has moved ahead very slowly, without any formidable progress. The failure of a Lowe's could avail itself to be a logical move forward for some other developer, which could provide upwards of around 200 jobs on a site of this size. The "Old Rt. 8" piece is hampered for funds, but with recent meetings last fall with the BRPC Transportation Planners, there is a plan to seek future Federal Highway Transportation moneys in which to make this a full, modern roadway, complete with drainage, lighting, stripping, etc. These three project pieces taken together are in a much better state for building now versus its former 2004 CEDS stance.

Necessity of the Project to Enable, Enhance/Allow other Economic Development Projects:

This criterion is the true hinge-pin of success. All three of these project pieces will significantly affect the existing Route 8 corridor, both in terms of traffic flow, ease to work for the new jobs that will be created, and other future development spin-off projects. The former "Gravel Bank" piece is the most site-ready parcel, and a new development there will draw other developers to the former "North Adams Plaza" parcel, which is just down the street no more than a half mile to the south. Should both parcels see new development, whether "Big Box" or commercial manufacturing type of entities, this will clearly spur on the need to redevelop the Old Route 8 connector road. It is envisioned that this new roadway, if fully developed with Federal Highway funds, that travelers will utilize this to get between the two sites, thereby alleviating some traffic congestion on the Route 8 corridor. As important, a new secondary Route 8 'rear' corridor will open up this area and allow for easier access to those parcels along this route. Most of the parcels on the westerly side of this rear undeveloped roadway are just that, parcels, with no true incentive to develop due to the lack of quality transportation. Super stores, such as Wal-Mart and Lowe's, serve as "anchors" and usually attract other stores and businesses. With a new Old Route 8 connecting back to the Town of Adams, these presently undeveloped westerly parcels will now have quality road frontage, and a true means of easy access. There is a tremendous amount of "connectivity" when this overall project is looked upon in this way. This coupled with the efforts of the Town of Adams for other strategic spots along Route 8, such as new signalization at various spots, allows the Route 8 Corridor Access Management Plan to produce viable products and achievements.

Potential Impacts or Unintended Consequences from a Project that might have Long Term Detriment Effects:

The potential impacts of this project are much more on the positive side versus putting forth any type of detriment. As stated above, all of these areas are cleared of buildings, debris, and face no pending environmental concerns, as the Super Wal-Mart project late last year cleared its big MEPA process from the Commonwealth. If you look at the City's EDA grant application that was based upon the 2004 CEDS, it put forth three alternatives:

Alternative # 1: Entire site development by one developer - This generates a 78,200 SF building with 164 parking spaces.

Alternative # 2: Subdivision by 2 independent developers - This generates one 42,678 SF building with 86 parking spaces and a second building at 35,506 SF with 74 spaces.

Alternative # 3: Subdivision by an independent developer with the City maintaining a public-right-of-way access through the site - This generates one 36,809 SF building with 75 spaces and a second building at 32,123 SF with 67 spaces.

Using a simple “measuring stick” of 1 job per parking space, job creation on this parcel alone would produce from 67 to 164 jobs, jobs that will be very much service-oriented if it should be a Wal-Mart, or higher skilled if it should go factory-based. Job creation at the former “North Adams Plaza” site are very much in the same amount and type of job, and the reconstruction of the “Old Rt. 8” piece will provide many temporary construction jobs. But, it is this spin-off of the economic development potential of those lots that are juxtaposed to the “Old Rt. 8” corridor that could become quite promising, but admittedly no formal preliminary marketing work has been on this project segment. This will be looked to as we go forward with the future federal highway funds.

Geographical Dispersion of Projects throughout the County:

This is also a key component of this project. It is a fact that EDA will not invest in non-low income geographic populations. Therefore, it stands to reason that North Adams should be given high priority for at least having some worthy projects that are most definitely located within a low income area. This allows, at a minimum, the City, as well as North Berkshire County, the chance in positioning itself to garner future EDA moneys. North Adams has been designated by the State Department of Housing & Community Development as a “Mini-Entitlement” community, which has a 63% community-wide low income person status. A project as proposed herein will also clearly benefit the Town of Adams, as it too shares in with the Route 8 corridor management and access issues.

Capacity of those involved with the Implementation of the Project Proponent to actually implement the Project:

The City of North Adams, through its Office of Community Development, has been, and will continue to be at the helm of this project. As ‘public real estate developers’, the City is well poised to carry out this project, similar to the many other major projects it has done over the last decade alone, such as the Armory Adaptive Reuse Project, the Municipal Skating Rink Improvements, its transfer/recycling center, etc., just to name a few.

It is hoped that his update will bring better light upon this new and combined project, as the City most assuredly believes that the impact for the project will be significant for the region.

Again, I thank you for the opportunity to better clarify.

Best,

MFN/mn

Project Proponent

City of Pittsfield

Project(s)

Pittsfield Municipal Airport Improvement Proj.

Hubbard Avenue Improvements

McKay Street Parking Garage Improvements

West Street Water Line Upgrade

Regionalization of the City of Pittsfield Wastewater Treatment Facility

Regional North to South Connector (*not a project proposal*)



The City of Pittsfield, Massachusetts Department of Community Development

Deanna L. Ruffer
Director

James M. Ruberto
Mayor

March 3, 2011

Mr. Thomas Matuszko
Assistant Director
Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
1 Fenn Street, Suite 201
Pittsfield, Massachusetts 01201

Dear Mr. Matuszko:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the ranking of submitted economic development projects as part of the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Project.

Before providing these comments we feel it is imperative to express our disappointment that this process seems to have completely missed the most significant regional economic development need in Berkshire County; that is the over arching need for a limited access connector from the Massachusetts Turnpike through Pittsfield and north to North Adams. The City is extremely disappointed that this overriding need does not seem to even be addressed in the CEDS process.

A related matter is the regional significance of the ongoing Safety Improvement Project at the Pittsfield Municipal Airport. It should be very concerning to all in the region that this project was not ranked as a high priority. While it is safe to say this project is underway, permits have been secured and work has started, the many delays in the project may have impacts on costs. This is a project that many across the County have worked for years to bring to fruition on the basis of the significant regional economic benefits. We advocate that, until all required improvements are completed, this project be listed as a high priority project.

The City is pleased to see the William Stanley Business Park and the proposed Life Science Center ranked as high priority economic development projects. However, these projects – and all of the other listed projects involving development of new specialty manufacturing jobs in the County – can not achieve their true potential if we as a region do not address the issue of transportation connectivity.

We are surprised that the Hubbard Avenue improvements project was ranked as a low priority, yet development of the Schnopp-Roberts Site and the Ashuelot Park are ranked as medium priorities. While we support the development of more industrially zoned property in the county, we are concerned that if Hubbard Avenue is not upgraded, the build-out of these two sites will be very problematic. The Dalton/Pittsfield Traffic Impact Study prepared for BRPC in 2009 found that without improvements a number of areas of Hubbard Avenue would function at Levels of Service ratings of E or F as build-out of these properties occurred. We advocate that the Hubbard Avenue Improvements Project and the Schnopp-Roberts and Ashuelot Park projects all need to be listed as medium priority projects.

We encourage the CEDS committee to reconsider its ranking of the McKay Street Parking Garage. This facility provides parking for more than a 1,000 downtown employees, customers and visitors. This 15+ year old structure is in dire need of over \$7 million dollars of upgrades. The design work for this project has been completed and is ready to go out to bid. Without these upgrades the City's ability to attract a new owner or tenant(s) to the former KayBee Toys Building with over 75,000 square feet of Class A commercial space is greatly impeded. This building alone has the potential to bring more than 300 new jobs to downtown Pittsfield. This parking facility is also the primary parking area for the Beacon Cinema, which brings more than 190,000 people a year to our downtown, as well as the many restaurants and retail businesses that are now located downtown. This is one of the last major infrastructure upgrades needed to complete the revitalization of our downtown, which is a designated Growth District and high priority development area for the Commonwealth.

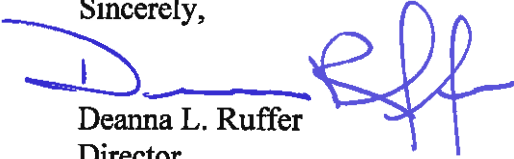
We also ask the CEDS committee to reconsider the ranking given the West Street Water Line Upgrade project. The job creation figures provided on the original project form (52 Full Time Non-Construction jobs to be created and 27 retained) reflect the anticipated growth within one company to be served by the upgraded waterline. In addition to this economic growth, there are more than 100 acres of commercial and industrial zoned land along West Housatonic Street available for development or redevelopment which will benefit from this project. Conservatively this development and redevelopment could result in more than 100 new jobs being created. This is the only area of the county, other than Lee, which has reasonable access to interstate highways. This is a project which has been reviewed by EDA but could not be funded due to the lack of an approved CEDS. The design work for this project has been completed and City matching funds have been allocated.

Finally, we ask the CEDS committee to reconsider the ranking given to the Regionalization of the City of Pittsfield Wastewater Treatment Facility. This facility is a regional asset, serving the City of Pittsfield and the Towns of Lanesborough, Dalton, Hinsdale, Lenox and Richmond. Unfortunately, this asset is severely at risk as EPA is mandating millions of dollars of upgrades be made in the next few years. Regionalization is imperative and a clear prerequisite to other economic development projects within any community currently served by this facility, impacting a number of projects listed in the CEDS document. In response to a joint request from the Town of

Lenox and City, this project has been selected by BRPC to receive District Local Technical Assistance to develop a Regionalization Feasibility Study.

We appreciate this opportunity to respond to the draft ranking and appreciate the diligent work of the CEDS Advisory Committee. However, we question the manner in which this process has been undertaken to-date. As the members of the advisory committee have acknowledged, the process used for soliciting input and evaluating economic development opportunities and needs in the County was problematic. As a result, the City feels the CEDS planning effort needs to be limited to simply meeting the pre-requisite requirement for accessing Economic Development Administration grant programs.

Sincerely,



Deanna L. Ruffer
Director

Project Proponent

Berkshire Mall

Project(s)

Berkshire Mall/Civic Center/Hotel

BERKSHIRE MALL



Lanesborough Enterprises NEWCO, LLC

February 28, 2011

Mr. Thomas Matuszkzo, AICP
Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
1 Fenn Street, Suite 201
Pittsfield, MA 01201

RE: Berkshire County CEDS Project – Prioritization

Dear Mr. Matuszkzo,

I am writing in response to your letter dated February 18, 2011 updating the progress of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Project. Per your request, I would be pleased to comment on the initial ranking of the projects as a whole. I also appreciate this opportunity to provide additional information specific to the Berkshire Mall Convention/Civic Center/Hotel project.

Put succinctly, based on my attendance at the meetings and observation of the process, I believe that CEDS Committee and BRPC staff have done a commendable job evaluating the projects. The application process was open by invitation to all project proponents through their municipalities. Meetings were posted and the comments from the general public were welcome. Questions were clearly answered by BRPC staff. Additionally, I feel that the projects have been fairly ranked in terms of readiness and regional importance.

Specific to the Berkshire Mall Convention/Civic Center/Hotel project, recognizing that this project is presently largely within the planning and development phase, I would concur that that the project has been appropriately identified as a “Medium” regional priority at this time. As an advocate of the project, I am confident that the proponents will demonstrate continued progress on the project as it advances through to completion. This being said, we will certainly avail ourselves of the opportunity to update the status of the project annually.

Regarding the six fundamental elements emphasized to aid in assessing the regional significance of projects:

- Readiness to proceed from a concept or idea to an actual “on the ground” economic development project

The project is presently in the planning and development stages.

- Availability and current status of other funds that would increase the likelihood of successful a project

Funding sources to be identified. It is the opinion of the proponents that multiple funding sources will be sought and secured.

- The necessity of the proposed project as a prerequisite to enable, enhance or allow other economic development projects

The proponents recognize that the project is truly regional in scope and design. The primary trade area is anticipated to include a circumference west to east from Albany, NY to Springfield, MA and north to south from Manchester VT to central CT. The additional traffic flows and patterns that will develop in the Berkshires will enable, enhance and encourage additional economic growth

- Potential impacts or unintended consequences from a project that might have long term detrimental effects.

None anticipated

- Geographical dispersion of projects throughout the county

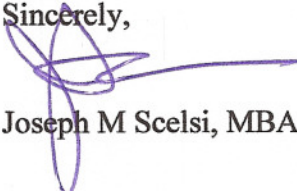
This project will help to provide the traffic flows and population density necessary to encourage additional economic growth, development and prosperity in the Berkshires.

- Capacity of those involved with the implementation of the project proponent to actually implement the project

The developer has more than 30 years experience and a proven track record of planning, constructing and managing retail shopping malls and entertainment destinations in the Northeast.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with additional information related to this important project. Please free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Joseph M Scelsi, MBA

Project Proponent

WiredWest

Project(s)

Last Mile Broadband Infrastructure



March 2, 2011

Re: 2011 CEDS Report Ranking Comments

On behalf of the 47 WiredWest Charter towns in four counties, including 21 in Berkshire County, I would applaud the CEDS committee for ranking this project as “high” in regional importance. A regional, municipal fiber-optic network, universally available to homes, businesses, healthcare providers, schools and government agencies will provide fundamental infrastructure for our region to survive and thrive in the digital economy. It is infrastructure that other regional economic development initiatives will be dependent upon for their success, and will be a significant driver of future investment in the region.

Re: Readiness to proceed from a concept of idea to an actual “on the ground” economic development project:

WiredWest has shown its ability to reach the necessary milestones in its progress to becoming a “on the ground” project.

Governance: The project is on track to have its governance structure formalized by June 30, 2011, which will be a public cooperative made up of towns that have passed M.G.L. 164 Municipal Light Plant legislation. This is a lengthy process requiring each town to have two town meetings and pass legislation. We recommended that towns fast-track this process by scheduling a special meeting prior to their annual spring meetings. As of March 3rd, 2011, 24 towns have followed the expedited schedule and will have conducted their first votes. This positions the public cooperative to be formed on June 30th with a very strong core of towns ready to proceed.

An additional measure to expedite the formation of the Cooperative is that the WiredWest Governance Committee has already completed the time-consuming process of developing a comprehensive set of bylaws that will be approved by the Charter Town Delegates and recommended to the incoming Governing Board of the public co-operative.

Business Plan/Financing: WiredWest has been working with a national-caliber community broadband consultant, with a track record of bringing these types of network projects to fruition, to create a comprehensive business plan. The plan is close to completion. This will provide the project team with time to identify and pursue potential sources of financing prior to the Cooperative being formed on June 30, 2011

The group has also consulted with other operating networks, legal counsel, sources of financing and potential partners. We expect initial financing to be a combination of grants, local notes and other sources of low-interest loans. This financing would be used towards pilot projects in the WiredWest region that would provide equity in the project and prove project management; revenue/costs projections and assumptions; and the business model. Once the concept is proven, the WiredWest Cooperative has the option to use their bonding authority to issue municipal bonds, to finance larger segments of the network buildout.

Project Management: In order to best manage our impact in WiredWest towns, which are spread over a large geographic region, WiredWest has developed a network of representatives in its charter towns. In addition, there are committees assigned to various tasks, as follows: Steering, Governance/Bylaws, Marketing & Outreach, Finance, Fundraising, Data and Technology. WiredWest delegates and outside experts participate in these committees, and there is a strong breadth and depth of expertise there to support building the organization.

However, the WiredWest group recognizes the complexity of a project of this magnitude, and has contracted relevant expertise to guide the process of planning and building of the organization. Currently WiredWest is working with two national-caliber experts in community broadband, who have participated in the planning and building of similar networks around the country. We will continue to evaluate our planning needs as they arise, and bring on relevant expertise where appropriate.

Re: Availability and current status of other funds that would increase the likelihood of a successful project

WiredWest is currently engaged in a fundraising campaign to provide ongoing operational funding, to continue our business planning prior to the public cooperative issuing financing. Hilltown CDC has agreed to serve as the fiduciary for WiredWest, enabling the organization to raise tax-deductible donations. In addition, WiredWest has identified several potential underwriters for specific project costs. The project has also benefited from the provision of significant in-kind expertise locally, and from other community networks.

Based on the experiences of other similar networks, including EC Fiber in Vermont, in addition to local expressions of interest in this project, WiredWest is confident it will be able to raise the money for pilot projects from individuals, and the public and private sectors.

Re: the necessity of the proposed project as a prerequisite to enable, enhance or allow other economic development projects

The potential economic leverage of the WiredWest project for further development is significant, if not vital, to future regional economic development.

High-speed internet access is a well documented driver of economic growth and employment. A 2006 CMU/MIT study showed that communities with affordable broadband enjoy faster rates of economic growth, and a Brookings Institution Study in 2009 found that every 1% increase in broadband availability corresponds to a .3% increase in employment. Broadband networks now serve as a communication and transaction platform for the entire economy. A 2004 OECD study showed that countries that have deployed broadband development programs foster increases in domestic education, quality of life, productivity and new industries.

In Berkshire County, there are over 20 towns with limited or no high-speed internet access. Even the citizens and businesses that *do* have access are using last-generation technologies that cost substantially more than the faster, more reliable fiber-optic service available to our suburban and urban counterparts.

Fiber-optic infrastructure, providing abundant, affordable and reliable bandwidth is the new standard for conducting business in the digital economy, and one of the most powerful economic tools for attracting investment to a region today. WiredWest recently met with Graham Richard, known as “America’s Broadband Mayor,” from Fort Wayne, IN. He told WiredWest that in Fort Wayne’s 2007 surveys of site selection specialists and people looking to invest in Indiana, access to high-speed broadband was second, third, and always in the top five reasons a company would invest in an area.” He also provided examples of regions, cities and towns

being passed over for lack of fiber infrastructure. In addition, WiredWest's consultant Andrew Cohill conducted a similar survey in 2010, where access to fiber-optic infrastructure was the second most important reason to invest in a region behind access to skilled labor. A recent meeting with a local construction firm that had shown potential tenants around the proposed William Stanley Business Park said every firm wanted to know about the connectivity that was available. Fiber-optic infrastructure is the only technology with the capacity, security and reliability to meet today and in particular, tomorrow's needs of business.

And businesses' needs are not limited to the physical location of their business. More and more businesses are realizing the significant cost-savings and employee productivity increases from telecommuting, and are interested about the quality of connections at their employees' homes. In fact, there is a growing market for home-based employment opportunities, and to qualify for those jobs, prospects must have an adequate broadband connection. Location-independent job opportunities offer better employment options, especially to rural workers, and if our residents are able to take advantage of them, it would bring more money into our communities.

There are addition economic benefits of telecommuting, as outlined in [this report](#).. There are measurable quality of life improvements for employees associated with reduced time commuting and more time spent at home, including health benefits. People who telecommute spend more money in their communities. This is especially relevant for the Berkshires, where we have a significant second-home population that is eager to be able to telecommute and spend more time here, and potentially move here full-time. That would bring more money into our communities and create a stronger tax base. The only thing that is preventing this is lack of adequate broadband.

Fiber-optic infrastructure also has significant benefits for small business. A recent study by [RVA Consultants](#) indicated home-based businesses with a fiber-to-the-home connection had \$20,000 to \$30,000 more in annual revenues coming into the home. If you aggregate that within a community, you begin to see a very substantial economic multiplier effect.

Re: Potential impacts or unintended consequences from a project that might have long-term detrimental effects

WiredWest does not see any detrimental consequences to building out a universal fiber-optic network. It will make our region attractive to business, and towns may wish to create a plan for business development in their municipalities.

Re: Geographic dispersion of projects throughout the county

WiredWest has 21 Charter towns from Berkshire County, which are mostly towns unserved and underserved by broadband. Once a core business is established, WiredWest may consider expanding to larger towns.

Re: Capacity of those involved with the implementation of the project proponent to actually implement the project

The WiredWest management group realizes two fundamental principles in managing this project.

The first is that it's critical to have a base of support in each town. We have developed a network of advocates in each of our towns that are involved not only with their town's participation, but also the overall project. We have engaged these same delegates, in addition to outside expertise to contribute to accomplishing specific

organizational tasks, including Overall project leadership, Governance/Bylaws, Marketing & Outreach, Finance, Fundraising, Data and Technology.

However, the WiredWest group recognizes the complexity of a project of this magnitude, and has contracted relevant expertise to guide the process of planning and building of the organization. Currently WiredWest is working with two national-caliber experts in community broadband, who have participated in the planning and building of similar networks around the country. We will continue to evaluate our planning needs as they arise, and bring on relevant expertise where appropriate.