



COMMERCE DIGEST

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State gets Internet Service Grant

Rhode Island is one of 15 states getting federal grants from the Department of Commerce to map broadband Internet access and plan for its future use. The Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation will receive \$1.5 million from the Commerce Department's National Telecommunications and Information Administration. U.S. Sen. [Jack Reed](#) said the project will ultimately lead to expansion of broadband Internet service in the state. "Expanding broadband services to more Rhode Islanders is a smart investment in our state's infrastructure and economy," he said. "It will help boost local economic productivity in communities that currently lack the technology, while allowing for improved service availability at our schools, hospitals and other vitally important public institutions."

Stuart Freiman, business development manager for information technology and digital media at the state EDC, said the Obama administration has identified broadband infrastructure as an important part of the nation's economic development, and has called for a national broadband map, which will be created using data from each state. The map is scheduled to be completed and publicly available by Feb. 17, 2011.

About \$1 million in federal money will be used to create the Rhode Island map over a two-year period. The map will include data on speed, location and technology of broadband service. Freiman said the mapping process should begin in early 2010.

The remaining \$500,000 will be used planning how to utilize and improve broadband service to benefit education, health care and economic development.

Freiman said Rhode Island already has a strong broadband infrastructure, although some communities have better access than others. The map, he said, will help identify the strengths and weaknesses of the system. Unlike some other states, he said, Rhode Island does not have large rural areas that lack broadband Internet access.