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## **Boston Business Journal**

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# Verizon to spend \$200M to expand networks

Boston Business Journal - by [Jackie Noblett](#) Journal staff

**Verizon Communications Inc.** will expand its FiOS Internet and cable television offerings to 31 cities and towns and bring broadband service to 23 unserved communities in central and western Massachusetts this year as a part of a \$200 million expansion.

The rollout will provide broadband services to about 70 percent of the residents in Becket, Blandford, Colrain, Cummington, Florida, Goshen, Hancock, Heath, Leverett, Leyden, Middlefield, Monroe, Montgomery, New Ashford, New Marlborough, Pelham, Plainfield, Rowe, Sandisfield, Tolland, Westhampton, Windsor and Worthington.

"Today is an important day for those of us who believe in broadband's future," said Donna Cupelo, regional vice president for Massachusetts and Rhode Island, in a press conference this morning."

The announcement comes as Gov. Deval Patrick's \$25 million broadband investment bond bill moves through the legislature supported by many members of the western Massachusetts legislative delegation, including Sen. Stan Rosenberg of Amherst and Rep. Daniel Bosley of North Adams.

"It is not just about giving families access to broadband, it's building a business network in western Massachusetts that has been hampered by a lack of broadband," Bosley said.

The expansion of broadband across the state has not been without controversy. Issues over cost and ownership of any network built pitted carriers against government officials and open Internet advocates demanding low-cost, open networks/

The announcement came before a much talked about summit on the future of broadband in Western Massachusetts on Saturday. Insiders say several broadband carriers were upset that they were originally not included in the panel, but Internet neutrality advocacy group **FreePress** was.

Cupelo said plans for the expansion have been in the works since last summer and were finalized last month, and are independent of any public funding as well as the requirements that may be associated with such funding.

"As we have proven in the past, we take pride in the networks we have built throughout Massachusetts," she said, "and we look forward to working with the state on plans to work with associated networks in addition to our own."

The FiOS rollout comes as the company topped **RCN Corp.** as the second largest cable television provider in the state last year with over 78,000 customers, according to filings with the state Department of Telecommunications and Cable.

FiOS will be brought to Ashland, Bellingham, Billerica, Danvers, Dover, Easton, Grafton, Hanover, Hingham, Hudson, Hull, Kingston, Lakeville, Malden, Marblehead, Mansfield, Maynard, Middleton, Milford, Millbury, North Andover, Northborough, Plymouth, Stoughton, Stow, Sutton, Taunton, Walpole, Westford, and Weston. Cupelo said the company has experimented with FiOS deployments in parts of Dorchester, but it does not have any immediate plans to bring it to all of Boston.

Once completed, Verizon will offer cable television to about 500,000 residents in more than 90 communities.

Verizon hopes to have the networks built out and operational by the spring, using workers affiliated with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers unions in eastern and western Massachusetts. It also plans on hiring about 200 workers across the state to manage the new networks.

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