



Embargoed until 12 PM, April 11, 2005

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New reports make definitive case for Municipal Broadband Consumer groups debunk incumbent industry propaganda

**Press Conference Call:
Host: Consumers Union
Monday, April 11, 2005,
12:00 PM
866-711-1455
Participant code: 281119**

WASHINGTON – Municipal broadband networks can provide an essential catalyst for market competition, economic development, and the achievement of universal, affordable Internet access, according to three new reports released today by the Media Access Project (MAP), Consumer Federation of America (CFA), Free Press, and the Florida Municipal Electric Association. Furthermore, contrary to the assertions of opponents of municipal entry, local governments have proven more than capable of successfully building and maintaining such networks.

The MAP/CFA/Free Press Report, “Connecting the Public: The Truth About Municipal Broadband,” makes a strong case for municipal broadband, while responding to the arguments of skeptics. “Municipal networks build local communities by connecting people to needed services and attracting jobs,” said Harold Feld, Senior Vice President of the Media Access Project.

“In most places in the country, particularly in traditionally underserved communities such as minority neighborhoods and rural areas, the duopoly of local phone and local cable incumbents has failed consumers,” said Mark Cooper, Director of Research at the Consumer Federation of America. “Municipal networks provide a needed safety net and competitor. Just as municipal electric systems proved critical to making access to electric service universal in the 20th Century, municipal networks will make broadband access universal in the 21st.”

A separate study by Free Press, “Telco Lies: The Truth About Municipal Broadband,” takes up a case-by-case study of the municipal networks most often cited by telco and cable incumbents as “failures.” The analysis shows that most of the statistics demonstrating municipal failure are years out of date, unverified, or inaccurate. “The industry lobbies and their affiliated think tanks have been peddling misinformation for too long,” said Ben Scott, Policy Director at Free Press. “This report sets the record straight, exposing the Orwellian propaganda that labels success as failure by offering the unvarnished truth.”

Independently, the Florida Municipal Electric Association released a study by economist George Ford comparing similarly situated cities in Florida. The paper demonstrates that in cities where municipalities have offered communications services, there is a significant increase in economic development. Florida is one of several states considering legislation to prohibit or restrict municipal broadband systems. Other states include Colorado, Texas, Iowa, Illinois and Nebraska.

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