



Speed A Wise Investment

By Herald editorial staff

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It's impossible for the Bay State to bill itself as a business mecca as long as thousands of residents are still forced to dial up for Internet service.

High-speed Internet is a prerequisite for anyone trying to launch a small business from home - or to stay connected to their company in this era of globe-trotting freelancers.

And why on earth would a business want to locate in a region where its employees can't even download a song from iTunes at home in their free time!

That's why Gov. Deval Patrick's plan to invest \$25 million in taxpayer funds to help bring high-speed Internet to rural parts of the state is not another freebie or a giveaway - but a wise investment in our infrastructure.

The state can't force Internet providers like Verizon or Comcast to build out their systems in communities where it isn't cost-effective. But it can partner with those companies to improve cable and Internet access in the 32 towns that don't have it and the 63 considered "underserved."

And unlike the governor's plan to bail out homeowners who took a gamble on risky home loans - or to invest taxpayer dollars in speculative biotech ventures - the state should reap a tangible benefit from this kind of spending on economic development.

Like many Patrick administration proposals this one is still lacking in details. But the idea is to have the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative, an agency whose sole purpose is to promote technology in the Bay State, administer the funds to improve access.

It's the equivalent of spending taxpayer funds to build a highway interchange, thereby encouraging job growth and improving quality of life. And isn't that the rightful domain of government.