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UNIVERSITY of NEW HAMPSHIRE
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

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February 11, 2010

The Honorable Larry Strickling
Assistant Secretary of Commerce
National Telecommunications and Information Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Assistant Secretary Strickling:

On behalf of the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension, I wish to express our support of the statewide broadband proposal submitted by the University of New Hampshire to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) Broadband Technologies Opportunities Program (BTOP) Round 2 program. The UNH Cooperative Extension provides New Hampshire citizens with research-based education and information, enhancing their ability to make informed decisions that strengthen youth, families and communities, sustain natural resources, and improve the economy.

As a University outreach program, we have a network of professional Extension staff located in all 10 New Hampshire counties. Our staff work with local volunteers and specialists on the UNH campus to design and conduct educational programs that meet societal, environmental and economic needs. We reach one in four New Hampshire residents with information or assistance, and we recruit, train and support over 4,500 trained volunteers who work with staff to conduct educational programs to reach a greater number of New Hampshire citizens.

One challenge we are always confronting in providing these services to our rural areas is the availability of reliable, affordable, adequate middle and last-mile transport of Internet bandwidth. In many of our rural areas, there are no available transport service alternatives; in some of our areas, one does exist, but the Internet service costs are so high, it is not economically viable to purchase service. The Network New Hampshire Project being proposed by the statewide partner group led by the University of New Hampshire is an extremely useful pathway for us, and hence to the communities of New Hampshire. Access to such a network would enable us to use current communications technology including computer networking and interactive television as well as link our county offices to distance education networks that provide videoconferencing and satellite downloads, to bring education seminars, workshops and training to all parts of the state.

For these reasons, we at UNH Cooperative Extension are enthusiastic supporters of New Hampshire's efforts at constructing the Network New Hampshire Project. We encourage the funding and construction of this project, and we look forward to being a user of the finished network upon its completion.

Sincerely,

John E. Pike
Dean and Director
UNH Cooperative Extension

