

Rep. Eshoo Introduces Broadband Conduit Legislation

Bill Will Improve Access and Reduce Costs for Broadband Deployment

Thursday, May 14, 2009

Washington, D.C. – Today, Rep. Anna G. Eshoo (D-Palo Alto) introduced the Broadband Conduit Deployment Act, which will spur the deployment of broadband networks throughout the U.S. She was joined in introducing the bill by House Energy & Commerce Chairman Henry Waxman (D-Beverly Hills), Communications, Technology and the Internet Subcommittee Chairman Rick Boucher (D-Virginia), and Rep. Edward J. Markey (D-Massachusetts). The legislation will require all new federal highway projects to include “broadband conduit” – plastic pipes which house fiber-optic communications cable. Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-Minnesota) is working on similar legislation for introduction in the Senate.

“According to industry experts, more than half of the cost of new broadband deployment is attributable to the expense of tearing up and repaving roads,” said Rep. Eshoo. “By putting the broadband conduit in place while the ground beneath the roadways is exposed, we will enable any authorized communications provider to come in later and install fiber-optic cable at far less cost.”

The Broadband Conduit Deployment Act would apply to all new road projects funded by federal surface transportation legislation, which is due to be reauthorized this year. The Department of Transportation is permitted to waive the requirement where necessary and is required to work with the FCC to determine levels of existing service and potential demand for broadband service in a particular area.

“Depending on what study you look at, the U.S. ranks anywhere from 15th to 22nd in broadband, behind countries such as Finland, Belgium, and Luxembourg,” said Eshoo. “Anything we can do to reduce the barriers to deployment and increase investment and competition for broadband will make our country more connected, more competitive, and more prosperous. This simple, commonsense proposal will actually do a great deal to connect more Americans to more affordable, higher quality broadband connectivity.”

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