

Lopez, Donna

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**From:** Saul Tannenbaum [saul@tannenbaum.org]  
**Sent:** Monday, June 04, 2012 11:01 AM  
**To:** City Council  
**Cc:** Lopez, Donna  
**Subject:** Municipal broadband

To the Honorable City Council

I write in emphatic support of Councilor Cheung's Policy Order requesting that the Manager investigate and report back in detail the financial underpinnings of a municipal broadband network.

Municipal broadband was once a fad, then went out of favor but now, as Councilor Cheung points out, is again receiving attention as a real solution to what are increasingly seen as failures in the marketplace.

Cambridge is typical, in the Comcast, despite the City's best efforts, is a monopoly provider. As a monopoly, Comcast has little incentive to fix its customer service problems and is beginning to use its broadband monopoly to disadvantage, for example, competing video streaming services.

Cambridge is, fortunately, atypical in a number of important ways. Its stellar financial condition makes this potential investment feasible. It already owns and operates its core network as a base from which to build. It has a thriving technology sector which makes for a natural market. And, in MIT and Harvard, it has potential institutional partners as well as access to world class expertise to help craft a plan that could succeed.

The Council should, I believe, insist that this be a serious preliminary planning effort and be driven by an advocate for municipal broadband. It would be far too easy to develop some worst case, scary sounding numbers that would "prove" this project impractical. Instead, what Cambridge deserves is a best effort to show what it would take for municipal broadband to work.

Cambridge's AAA bond rating, low taxes and fiscal health shouldn't be an end in itself. Instead, they should be a base that allows Cambridge to undertake innovative, transformative investments that help secure its place as a world class city in the decades to come.

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Sent from my iPad