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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Survey Deadline Extended for Eastern Maryland Businesses and Organizations

Project Needs Business Input in First Phase of Broadband Deployment Strategy

Salisbury, Md. (June 18, 2003) - The deadline for Eastern Shore businesses and organizations to complete a survey to bring broadband connectivity to the region has been extended to **June 30th**. As the first part of the Eastern Shore's deployment strategy, the counties of Kent, Cecil, and Queen Anne's, the Mid-Shore Regional Council, the Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore, the Maryland Department of Business and Economic (DBED) and the Maryland Technology Development Corporation (TEDCO) are encouraging a strong response from Eastern Shore businesses in order to move forward with this planning process. The survey can be found at www.marylandtedco.org.

"I've spent a lot of time working on health issues, and I believe that our economic health is almost as important to our region as our physical health," said Mitzi Perdue. "One of the greatest issues we face today is our region's economic health. This health cannot improve without 21st technology and communications. Therefore by completing this two-minute business survey, businesses can help our region deploy additional, affordable high-speed Internet access, which will provide healthy economic development."

The focus of the confidential survey is to collect and analyze current and future market demand for broadband communications and determine specific investment requirements that will result in a more robust infrastructure for the region. Information will be held in the strictest confidence and neither business owners nor other organizations will be identified without their advance consent.

Mike Waal, National Sales & Marketing Manager for USA Fulfillment in Chestertown, MD, said, "I encourage every Eastern Shore business, large and small, that receives the survey form to please fill it out and return it as soon as possible. If you didn't get it in the mail then please go to the TEDCO website. Without an excellent response rate, we are not going to be able to make progress on this important issue.

For years I have complained, clamored and testified in Annapolis about being on the wrong side of the digital divide; that we desperately need affordable high speed, broadband telecommunication infrastructure and access for our Eastern Shore communities. This is our chance to say something and get the attention we need. This is an urgent call for action!”

The need for this strategic planning effort arose from TEDCO’s *eReadiness Maryland* project and the final report that determined the Eastern Shore’s private sector and households lag behind other areas of the state in their rate of broadband access and usage. The project seeks to resolve this lack of access by determining best practices for utilizing the region’s existing assets and providing specific workable solutions to fill existing gaps and needs in the counties of the Eastern Shore. The Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore and the Mid-Shore Regional Council are leading this effort.

“The Tri-County Council for Lower Eastern Shore is committed to the development and implementation of a regional strategy for economic development,” said Mike Pennington, the Council’s executive director. “The information from this survey is essential in developing a workable plan for the entire Eastern Shore.”

Kevin Morse, executive director of the Mid-Shore Regional Council, said, “Our hope is that businesses will recognize the importance of this survey and take a few minutes to fill it out. By working together with the businesses in the area, we can make the Eastern Shore an even better place to live and work.”

The Maryland Technology Development Corporation (TEDCO) was established by the General Assembly as a tool for Maryland to use in maintaining and enhancing its reputation as a leader in technology. TEDCO's mission is to foster the development of a technology economy that will create and sustain businesses throughout all regions in the state of Maryland. Currently, TEDCO has programs that aid and promote state-funded incubators, federal and university laboratories to increase technology transfer and Maryland's eCommerce.

For more information on TEDCO visit its updated website that includes better access to programs and resources at <http://www.marylandtedco.org/home.html#whatsnew>.

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