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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Lt. Governor Steele Encourages Western Maryland Businesses and Organizations to Respond to Survey on “Improving Access to Broadband Infrastructure”

CUMBERLAND, Md. (April 11, 2003) – Lieutenant Governor Michael S. Steele is asking all Western Maryland-based businesses and organizations to participate in a survey that will be mailed to over 1800 locations throughout Garrett, Allegany and Washington Counties in the next 10 days. The survey is part of an in-depth project being conducted by TLA Associates on behalf of the Tri-County Council for Western Maryland and the Maryland Technology Development Corporation (TEDCO)

www.marylandtedco.org/WesternMD.htm.

The focus of the confidential survey is to collect and analyze current and future market demand and determine specific investment requirements that will result in a more robust broadband communications infrastructure for the region. The business surveys must be returned by **May 16, 2003**.

“The goal, as always, is to improve economic opportunities for Western Maryland's businesses and citizens that builds upon the progress we have already made,” said Lt. Governor Steele. “This comprehensive survey will be most beneficial to Western Maryland if all organizations respond and complete the questionnaire in its entirety. Information will be held in the strictest confidence and neither business owners nor other organizations will be identified without their advance consent.”

The need for this study arose from TEDCO's eReadiness Maryland project and final report that determined Western Maryland's private sector and households lag behind other areas of the state in their rate of broadband access and usage. TLA Associates, in partnership with the Jacob France Institute and Battelle Memorial Institute, was awarded this contract in January after a request for proposals was released in late 2002. The project seeks to resolve this lack of access by determining best practices for utilizing the region's

existing assets, e.g. AllCoNet, and providing specific workable solutions to fill existing gaps and needs in the counties of Garrett, Allegany and Washington.

The Tri-County Council for Western Maryland is leading this effort to find practical, market-driven solutions that complement existing assets, and moves the region forward. “The Tri-County Council for Western Maryland is committed to the development and implementation of a regional strategy for economic development,” said Leanne Mazer, the Executive Director for Tri- County Council. “One of the focal points of the strategy is the development of a communications infrastructure for the three westernmost counties of Maryland. The Council would like to thank TEDCO, EDA, ARC and the regional participants that have assisted in helping move this project forward.”

Tri-County Council for Western Maryland supports local government within the tri-county region. The primary focus of this support is in the areas of economic development, planning, tourism and intergovernmental cooperation. As the Local Development District for western Maryland the Council has taken a proactive role in working with local, state and federal agencies to enhance the opportunities for the people of this region.

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 www.MarylandTEDCO.org.

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