

(iv) on or before June 30, 2005, issue a final report of the Task Force.

(j) The Maryland Technology Development Corporation shall provide staff support to the Task Force, with the assistance of the Forum for Rural Maryland, the Department of Budget and Management, and the Department of Business and Economic Development, and other appropriate State, regional, and local agencies.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That:

(a) The Department of Business and Economic Development, in assisting the Task Force on Broadband Communications Deployment in Underserved Rural Areas, is strongly encouraged to identify existing and significant potential demand for access to high-speed telecommunication and data transmission services facilities in underserved rural areas of the State, in consultation with local government officials, existing businesses, and existing regional and local consortia and other groups involved with high-technology economic development in those areas.

(b) The Department of Budget and Management, in assisting the Task Force on Broadband Communications Deployment in Underserved Rural Areas, is strongly encouraged to explore expansion of high-speed telecommunication and data transmission capacity, including fiber-optic cable and competing technologies, into underserved rural areas that have existing and significant potential demand for the capacity afforded by fiber-optic cable and competing technologies associated with State and local economic development, by expansion of the State backbone and network under § 3-705 of the State Finance and Procurement Article, through other Net.Work.Maryland or successor initiatives, or through other public-private cooperation with commercial providers of high-speed telecommunication and data transmission services, and is also strongly encouraged to explore alternative models for delivering these services in underserved rural areas.

(c) The Department of Business and Economic Development, in consultation with the Department of Budget and Management and in coordination with recommendations of the Task Force on Broadband Communications Deployment in Underserved Rural Areas, is strongly encouraged to facilitate the expansion of high-speed telecommunication and data transmission services and facilities into underserved rural areas of the State by matching existing and significant potential demand with private and public providers of these services and facilities.

SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect June 1, 2003. It shall remain effective for a period of 2 years and 1 month and, at the end of June 30, 2005, with no further action required by the General Assembly, this Act shall be abrogated and of no further force and effect.

May 22, 2003

The Honorable Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr.
President of the Senate
State House
Annapolis MD 21401