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CONTACT: Katie Malinowski, Executive Director
          (315) 778-4193, katie@tughill.org

**Tug Hill Commission Broadband Workshop Series:
Preparing for Broadband Infrastructure Investment in Rural Communities**

Watertown, NY - With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, issues with broadband on Tug Hill and other rural areas of New York and the country have been elevated. Areas of concern are households, especially low-income households, with K through 12 children attending school virtually, households with tele-health needs, and households with people teleworking. Access to quality broadband coverage data is fundamental to identifying and understanding underserved and unserved communities. It is generally agreed that the broadband coverage mapping resources that exist have limitations.

The Tug Hill Commission, along with many partners, has been working to identify solutions to improving broadband throughout the region and beyond. A series of three webinars in May and June will provide the chance for local government leaders, agency partners, and Tug Hill residents to learn more about how investments in broadband infrastructure can be made over the next several years. Individual registration links are provided below, and can also be found at tughill.org/upcoming-workshops/.

On May 12, 2021, Scott Rasmussen, the Assistant Vice President of Innovation & Broadband with Empire State Development, will present the *Statewide Perspective on Broadband*. His presentation will highlight the efforts that have been undertaken over the years to improve access to broadband across the state and current efforts to reach every household. The NYS Broadband Program Office has useful tools for accessing information quickly, such as the Residential Broadband Availability Map and the Residential Broadband Availability Search. Recently, a required $15-a-month internet service option for low-income families was approved under a new law in New York State, which will tackle affordability concerns in underserved communities. The state is also to undertake an in-depth statewide mapping study of broadband to identify the availability, reliability, and cost of high-speed broadband services.

Register for the *Statewide Perspective on Broadband* (May 12, 2021 01:00 PM) at
https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_mNCKXfMOQ3O4jZxc3oGplQ

On May 19, 2021, Joe Starks, the President of ECC Technologies, and Andy Lukasiewicz, Director of Broadband Services with ECC Technologies, will present a regional perspective, *How Broadband can be Delivered, a look at the Southern Tier Network.* Recognizing the need for more detailed mapping in Tug Hill and other   rural New

Helping local governments and citizens shape the future of the Tug Hill region.

York communities, partnerships were created regionally to address broadband issues in an eleven-county region, including Cortland, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oswego, Oneida, Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, St. Lawrence, Warren, and Washington counties. Each of these counties has partnered with ECC Technologies and several co-partnered with other regional partners to map the gaps in broadband infrastructure and service, and to identify barriers to broadband adoption. Jefferson, Lewis, and St. Lawrence counties partnered with the Development Authority of the North Country; Oswego, Onondaga, Cortland, and Cayuga counties partnered with the Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board; and Oneida and Herkimer partnered with Mohawk Valley Economic Development District. Joe Starks and Andy Lukasiewicz will discuss similar efforts that created the Southern Tier Network and will provide an update on all the counties' infrastructure inventories and broadband surveys.

Register for the ***How Broadband can be Delivered, A Look at the Southern Tier Network*** (May 19, 2021 01:00 PM) at https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_FXe55T-PT5ev4vVrChcWjA.

The third webinar on June 16 will be presented by David Wolf, the Telecom Division Manager with the Development Authority of the North Country, titled ***Technical Solutions and Things to Consider for Broadband Expansion***. The presentation will highlight technical broadband solutions implemented in the North Country and things that must be considered when discussing broadband expansion in rural communities. The focus will particularly be on the town of Tupper Lake, where the Development Authority is currently implementing a project funded by the Northern Border Regional Commission.

Register for ***Technical Solutions and Things to Consider for Broadband Expansion*** (June 16, 2021 01:00 PM) at https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_uSJ4hQmbRoq7ww1GWRb15Q

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The New York State Tug Hill Commission is a non-regulatory state agency charged with helping local governments, organizations, and citizens shape the future of the region, especially its environment and economy. The commission uses a grassroots approach to build local capacity and provide technical assistance in land use planning, community development, and natural resource management.