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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## ***Ambulance Service in Rural New York State*** **Issue Paper Released by NYS Tug Hill Commission**

**WATERTOWN, NY** – The NYS Tug Hill Commission recently published a new issue paper, ***Ambulance Service in Rural New York State***, available at <https://www.tughill.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Ambulance-Service-in-Rural-NYS.pdf>. Ambulance services provide critical first-response care in rural communities across New York State. Overseen by New York State Department of Health’s Bureau of Emergency Medical Services, a significant number of emergency medical services (EMS) agencies have closed in the past few years. The challenges for EMS and ambulance services include volunteer and staffing changes, a dysfunctional funding model, and increasing training requirements. This issue paper provides background on emergency services in New York and explores each of these challenges as experienced with municipalities and ambulance services in the Tug Hill region. It is intended to add to the statewide conversation about this important topic.

While municipalities are not mandated by law to provide emergency or general ambulance, it is likely a high priority for most taxpayers. The 2019 Tug Hill Residents and Landowners Survey found that when asked about police, fire, and ambulance services, 54% wanted to see these local services increased, with 42% wanting to keep those levels of services the same, but not increase them. General Municipal Law (GML) Article 6, Section 122b allows municipalities to provide emergency medical service, general ambulance service or some combination of these

either directly with a municipally operated service or by contracting with one or more individuals, municipal corporations, associations, or other organizations to provide such service.

Rising costs, lack of staffing and declining volunteerism, all pose challenges for maintaining affordable and adequate ambulance service in rural parts of New York State. More comprehensive analysis and potential solutions are needed to address the root of the problem and make sure rural New York State residents have access to reliable, timely and capable emergency response.

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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.