

Oneida County Broadband Expansion Projects

Oneida County Executive Anthony J. Picente Jr. announced this week in Vienna that nearly 1,000 homes and 2,600 residents will be receiving high speed internet service as part of \$2 million in county broadband expansion projects. The projects will span 10 areas, including five towns in Tug Hill: Forestport, Ava, Boonville, Remsen, and Vienna. Augusta, a town outside Tug Hill and southwest of Utica, is also included. Two internet service providers (ISPs) have been chosen through a request for proposals: Adirondack Techs (nine project areas) and Charter (one area).

Through an extensive mapping analysis between Oneida and Herkimer counties, Tug Hill Commission and Mohawk Valley Economic Development District, the Oneida County Department of Planning identified 2,079 homes in approximately 32 project areas with clusters of 20+ homes. This first step will reach 46% of the unserved homes identified.

The \$1,950,967 capital program also includes \$150,000 in ISP investment, and nine of the 10 projects include a 2% revenue share to offset county costs. Oneida County offered municipalities an opportunity to partner financially and leverage the funding to expand coverage even further in their towns. Picente made the expansion projects announcement in the town of Vienna, the only town to partner financially, and led to the town securing \$226,761 to service 111 homes. Oneida County is utilizing American Rescue Plan Act funding for this project.



Oneida County Executive Anthony Picente at Vienna Town Hall. L-R Jason Spelicy, Vienna Councilmember; Norman Leach, Oneida County Legislator; Anthony Picente; Michael Davis, Vienna Town Supervisor. Photo credit: Phillip Vanno, Oneida County.

North Shore Council of Governments Meets

The North Shore Council of Governments (NorCOG) met on Wednesday, July 5, at the West Monroe town hall. New York State Senator John Mannion was the group's guest that evening, and Senator Mannion briefed the group on his background, his work in Albany, addressed area concerns he'd been involved with, and took questions from those present.



Senator Mannion addresses the North Shore Council of Governments, comprised of officials from Central Square, Cleveland, Constantia, and West Monroe.

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Following that, NorCOG took up other issues including the upcoming economic development study to be conducted by the MRB Group, progress toward area preparedness for development pressures related to the Micron plan development, the Oneida Lake flooding task force, and efforts to support local water and sewer needs, with an update on multiple issues by Tug Hill Commission executive director Katie Malinowski.

July 28 Black River History Presentation

The Tug Hill Commission and Lewis County Chamber of Commerce, along with the Friends of the Black River community group, are sponsoring ***“We Are Still Here: The Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg”*** on Friday, July 28, 2023, from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. The presentation will be an introduction to the Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg, the Nation itself, and the confederacy it belongs to. In addition, it will discuss its historic and contemporary existence as well as its existence under settler-colonial rule and history and contemporary relationship with the Crown and the Canadian state.

This presentation will take place in the auditorium at South Lewis Central School, 4264 County Road 43 in Turin, NY, 13473. Doors will open at 6:30 p.m. For those that cannot be present in-person, a virtual broadcast will be offered via Zoom. Registration is required for this free event at tinyurl.com/BRHiawatha. Please note, all registrants will receive a Zoom link, even if they choose to attend in-person.

Chief Laurie Carr and Assistant Professor Chadwick Cowie will be the evening’s presenters. Chief Carr is the Chief of the Hiawatha First Nation Council and Chadwick Cowie is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Toronto. The Friends of the Black River group is honored to host Chief Carr and Professor Cowie in Lewis County. The Friends group originally connected with the Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg through *The Castorland Journal*, a historical account of the exploration of the Black River by early European settlers. The journal specifically states that the explorers met people from the Mississauga Nation who had traveled from the northwest part of Lake Ontario. This led to correspondence and the development of a relationship between Friends group member Heidi Lehmann and Chief Carr. A [recording](#) of the July 2022 Dr. John Gallucci’s presentation on *The Castorland Journal* is available on the Tug Hill Commission’s YouTube channel.

The Friends of the Black River is a group of community members working to support the Friends’ mission to sustainably promote ecological, historical and recreational resources of the Black River, harmoniously respecting both public and private interest, and develop beneficial partnership for stewardship. This mission is accomplished through education and outreach, projects and development, and conservation and recreation.

July 26 DRI/NY Forward Forum

Are you interested in applying for a Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) or NY Forward Award? The NYS Department of State is hosting a ***Retrospective for the Future of the Region's Downtown Revitalization Initiative and NY Forward Communities*** on Wednesday, July 26, from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. at Downtown Syracuse Campus of SUNY at Oswego, 2 South Clinton Street, Syracuse, NY

New York Secretary of State Robert J. Rodriguez - in cooperation with CenterState CEO and SUNY Oswego - invites communities to an afternoon forum in Syracuse on the past, present and future of Downtown Revitalization programs in the region.

Mayors from five DRI communities in the region, as well as private stakeholders—such as developers, colleges and businesses— will provide advice, insights, lessons-learned and recommendations to inform future program applicants and awardees.

To RSVP for this forum, or for more information, please contact Paul Beyer, the Director of Smart Growth at the New York Department of State: Paul.Beyer@dos.ny.gov.

RACOG June Board Meeting

On June 28, the River Area Council of Governments (RACOG) met in the village of Castorland. Tracey Verrier from MRB Group and Scott Burto, mayor of the village of West Carthage, presented on the final [Joint Economic Resiliency and Recovery Plan](#) for Carthage, West Carthage, Champion and Wilna. Also, Colleen Bradley (NYSDOH) and Kristin Martinez (NYSDEC) presented on the state’s Drinking Water Source Protection program.

Mickey Dietrich provided the RACOG circuit rider report and updated the group on the survey responses for the April RACOG Economic Visioning Summit. All responses rated the summit as very good to excellent, and RACOG plans to hold it again next year. Collaboration and sharing of ideas at the summit included discussions on ways for water/wastewater operators to get needed training, whether BOCES or through Jefferson Community College. Mickey and Katie Malinowski updated the group on the Friends of the Black River activities, including updates to the blackriverny.com website, Chief Carr’s July 28 presentation at South Lewis, drone videography and photography of the river, and navigation hazard mapping.

RACOG members also discussed the lack of CDL training in the area and a recent news report about the Massena highway superintendent becoming certified to do training for village employees. The commission said they would do some research and report back. The next RACOG board meeting will be on September 27.

New York Awarded \$664 Million in Broadband Funds

New York will receive more than \$664 million in federal Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) funds, part of the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Funding will be awarded in 2024-2025 to bring broadband infrastructure to unserved and underserved locations across the state and will be used primarily for providing fiber optic infrastructure to locations that currently have no broadband service.

A press release stated, “The \$1 billion-plus ConnectALL initiative, announced by Gov. Hochul in her January 2022 State of the State address, is New York state’s largest-ever public investment in broadband, aimed at transforming the state’s digital infrastructure to connect all New Yorkers to the internet. In addition to funding to reach unserved and underserved locations, ConnectALL includes grant programs to invest in public broadband infrastructure, to upgrade service to affordable and public housing, and to support digital inclusion and education on using the internet.”

New York will submit an initial grant distribution proposal to the National Telecommunication and Information Administration (NTIA). Following approval of the proposal, the ConnectALL office will solicit applications from internet service providers to build new broadband infrastructure in unserved and underserved areas of the state. That package of applications will be included in New York’s final proposal to NTIA, after which the state will receive its full BEAD allocation to issue grant awards.

The BEAD allocation follows a \$100 million award from the Treasury Department’s Coronavirus Capital Projects Fund announced by the governor in May, and two planning grants totaling over \$7 million announced in December.

The BEAD allocation is based largely on New York’s portion of the nation’s unserved locations, reported by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The FCC’s map originally showed New York had 106,290 unserved locations. In October 2022, “Hochul issued a challenge to the FCC’s broadband data maps, which revealed more than 31,000 underserved and unserved locations missing from the FCC’s data, following a statewide mobilization of regional, county and local officials, and New York’s own, first-of-its-kind interactive broadband map. In May, the FCC released updated data including over 140,000 unserved locations in New York and nearly 38,000 locations that have access to the minimal level of internet speeds to qualify as underserved.”

The ConnectALL office recently completed a three-month, statewide tour to inform the development of the BEAD five-year action plan, the BEAD initial proposal, and the State Digital Equity Plan. The plan will be available for public comment in September. Visit broadband.ny.gov/ for additional information or to be involved in the process or reach out to connectall@esd.ny.gov with any questions or comments.

Highway Dept. and Town Budgets Workshop August 23

The Tug Hill Commission and the Northern Oneida County Council of Governments are sponsoring a second workshop on Highway Departments and Town Budgets on Wednesday, August 23 from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the Town of Trenton Municipal Building, 8520 Old Poland Road, Barneveld, NY 13304.

There is often confusion about who is really in charge of the town highway department. Is it the town board or the highway superintendent? First delivered in Adams in May, instructor Laird Petrie will discuss the statutory duties of both the town board and the highway superintendent when it comes to highway operations including the highway budget, hiring and firing highway workers, and control of highway equipment. All are welcome and questions are encouraged. Since retirement from the Office of the State Comptroller in 2021, instructor Laird Petrie has been providing technical assistance and training to towns and villages on Tug Hill through a contract with the Tug Hill Commission.

Call 315-785-2380 or email tughill@tughill.org to register for this free workshop.



The May workshop in Adams was well attended by both highway departments and town boards.

Managing Case Files Webinar from NYS Archives July 26

New York State Archives has a training webinar scheduled for **Wednesday, July 26** from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. The session entitled "Managing Case Files" is intended for anyone who is responsible for managing case files and interested in improving the management of those records.

Case files come in many different forms: legal files, personnel folders, student records, real property files, among others. They also have many similarities: they are difficult to manage, they contain a variety of materials, many of them are confidential, and handling their disposition is often complicated. This webinar will explore pitfalls and benefits of case management systems, case file retention schedules, modern storage equipment and filing strategies and the benefits of digital imaging and electronic case file management.

The training is free and registration information can be found on the [Workshop Registration](#) page. The NYS Archives also has many recorded webinars that are available for viewing at your leisure, which are available on their [Webinar](#) page.

Looking for Volunteers for 2023 Black River Trash Bash

Members of the Lewis County Water Quality Coordinating Committee and the Tug Hill Commission are currently seeking volunteers to participate this fall in an annual citizen science/trash cleanup event. The Black River Trash Bash, now entering its 14th year, is organized annually by the Lewis and Jefferson County Soil and Water Conservation Districts and the Tug Hill Commission.

Since the completion of the Black River Watershed Management Plan (2010), events like the Black River Trash Bash shine a spotlight on the importance of healthy shorelines and watersheds, specifically by encouraging public participation in removing and preventing litter from entering our waterways. Throughout the previous thirteen years, volunteers from multiple county Soil and Water Conservation Districts, NYSDEC, NYS Tug Hill Commission, and various other entities have removed over 6,000 pounds of trash from sites located in Jefferson, Lewis, Hamilton, Herkimer and Oneida counties. Data collected during these cleanups are compiled through the Alliance for the Great Lakes and its Adopt-a-Beach data study. This data is used by scientists to study the sources of plastic pollution and help decision-makers create informed policies to protect the Great Lakes.

More volunteers from partner agencies, volunteer groups or local citizens who want to do their part to get involved in their regional watershed are always needed! The exact date of the next cleanup is still pending, so stay tuned for further details! If interested in participating or seek further information, please contact Gabriel Yerdon at gabriel@tughill.org or 315-785-2387.



Otter Creek cleanup crew, 2022 Black River Trash Bash.

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To request our newsletter electronically please email gwen@tughill.org or call

1-888-785-2380.

For upcoming trainings, grant deadlines, and meetings, view our [calendar](#).