



For Immediate Release: Tuesday, November 15, 2011

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NORTH COUNTRY REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL SUBMITS STRATEGIC PLAN, ANNOUNCES PRIORITY PROJECTS

The North Country Regional Economic Development Council has submitted its final Strategic Plan and priority projects. On Friday, November 11, the Council finalized and adopted these items for the region, which is composed of Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence counties. The Final Strategic Plan, “Transformational: Leading the Economic Renaissance of New York’s Small Cities and Rural Communities,” can be found at www.northcountryopenforbusiness.com.

The Strategic Plan is guided by the regional council’s vision statement and focuses on three macro strategies to spur job creation and regional economic growth: increase and retain jobs in industries that export products and import dollars, including traditional value-added manufacturing and agricultural jobs, as well as jobs in sectors including tourism, biotech and renewable energy; build wealth in the region by strengthening existing resources, building capacity and fostering entrepreneurial opportunities; and leverage the North Country’s economic development strategy in order to contribute a significant portion to the resurgence of New York State’s economy through increased jobs and the tax revenues the newly created jobs will generate.

“Thanks to Governor Cuomo, the seven-county North Country region has finally come together and defined our unique economic opportunities, while simultaneously building a powerful, new platform for regional development from Plattsburgh to Watertown to Speculator,” said Garry Douglas, President of the North Country Chamber of Commerce and North Country Regional Economic Development Council Co-Chair. “This plan is the result of an unprecedented surge of volunteer commitment and public engagement over an intense period of just three months, applying a bottom-up approach instead of top-down. The process we used worked, giving us an

economic roadmap that we are convinced is both visionary and practical at the same time, while encompassing, in a compelling way, the breadth and depth of our region's economic diversity.”

“The North Country is an especially diverse region, requiring attention to not just a few focal points, but to a range of interconnecting pieces that come together to show a total picture for an economy based on tourism, agriculture and small business, as well as strategic clusters of industry expertise such as defense, aerospace and transportation equipment, advanced materials and manufacturing, biotech and health,” said Anthony Collins, President of Clarkson University and North Country Regional Economic Development Council Co-Chair. “This plan incorporates those assets and clearly couples them with longer term infrastructure solutions to support them, such as broadband, regional branding, natural gas, transportation connectivity and emerging opportunities in clean energy.”

The North Country Regional Economic Development Council Strategic Plan provides a long-term roadmap to attract private investment, promote and facilitate connectivity between communities, revitalize and diversify communities, and create a climate that will allow entrepreneurs to flourish. It puts forth ways to achieve its vision by capitalizing on the region's shared assets: the iconic 1000 Islands and Adirondacks; the opportunities presented by the border with Canada; some of the best clean water resources in the Northeast; significant agricultural and forest reserves; abundant “clean” energy; incomparable four-season recreational opportunities; and its talented labor pool and entrepreneurial population.

The Strategic Plan is the product of an unprecedented level of collaboration and cooperation from hundreds of North Country residents across the largest region in the State. The planning process involved Regional Council members, stakeholders from across the region and community input gathered through more than half a dozen public forums and workshops as well as comment submitted on the Council's website.

The Governor has made \$1 billion available for the 10 Regional Councils, including \$200 million in competitive funding. A Strategic Plan Review Committee will analyze and compare each region's Strategic Plan. Based upon this review, four regions will be awarded up to \$40 million each in capital funding and tax credits to be applied toward the priority capital projects identified in their plans. The remaining allocations will be divided among the other six regions.

The North Country Regional Economic Development Council identified 16 priority projects in alignment with the Council's Strategic Plan that it recommends for immediate state support. The priority projects represent critical opportunities, across all seven counties, to build upon the region's strengths and competitive advantages and immediately accelerate job creation and growth. The projects collectively support direct creation/retention of more than 1,350 jobs, \$255.9 million in capital investment and \$39.96 million in state investment.

The North Country's priority projects launch the region's transformation by focusing on high-tech and traditional manufacturing, green energy production, arts & culture, tourism and agriculture. The priority project list includes:

- Bombardier Transit Plant Expansion
- Cleaner, Greener Communities Plan Development
- C-Speed Radar System
- Community Rental Housing around Fort Drum
- Community Transformation Tourism fund that will assist development of infrastructure with two specific projects immediately identified, construction of the Clayton Hotel and a green transportation pedal cab operation
- Water system upgrade in Gouverneur to retain jobs at the Kinney Distribution facility
- Improvements at the Kraft Foods plant
- LED lighting technology development by Ephesus Technology
- Remediation and site development in Lyons Falls
- North Country Pastured purchase of mobile food processing equipment to make it possible for farms to sell poultry to local restaurants and retail stores
- Newton Falls Rail upgrade
- Development of branding for the North Country region
- Conversion of the Black River Generation Facility to biomass
- Building a broadband system in Hamilton County
- Completion of the restoration of the historic Strand Theater
- Recruitment of scientists at Trudeau Institute

Created by Governor Cuomo, the Regional Economic Development Councils represent a fundamental shift in the state's approach to economic development—from a top-down development model to a community-based approach that emphasizes regions' unique assets, harnesses local expertise, and empowers each region to set plans and priorities.

The North Country Regional Economic Development Council is one of 10 regional councils across New York that will serve as a single point of contact for economic activity in the region. Through their strategic planning process, the Councils have identified priority projects that demonstrate the greatest potential for job growth. As part of the initiative, up to \$1 billion in state resources will be accessible to eligible economic development projects through existing program grants and tax credits.

Each Regional Council has developed and submitted to the state a plan for the development of their region, which provides a regional vision for economic development, addresses critical issues and opportunities, and lays out an implementation roadmap for future growth. The state will work with the Regional Councils to align state resources and policies, eliminate unnecessary barriers to growth and prosperity, and streamline the delivery of government services and programs to help the Regional Councils carry out their plans for development.

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North Country Regional Economic Development Council Priority Projects

Additional information on these projects can be found in the strategic plan, available at www.northcountryopenforbusiness.com.

▪ **Bombardier Main Plant and Test Track Expansion**

Bombardier Transit manufactures passenger Rail Cars for municipal, state and interstate transit systems. The project includes a 57,000 square foot expansion of the main plant; an upgrade of the main car shell welding robot; a 2,100 square foot expansion at the off-site testing facility, and electrification of an additional half mile of railroad track at the test facility. The changes will increase efficiency, flexibility and capacity for new contracts. To prepare for the project, Bombardier is also paving and modifying the back of the plant, purchasing a new weighing system and making improvements to the security system.

▪ **Cleaner Greener**

Essex County will serve as the lead agency on behalf of the North Country region to engage in a multi-phased project to develop a comprehensive energy sustainability plan. The plan will include prioritized actions based on a Greenhouse Gas (GHG) baseline assessment and inventory, and goals to achieve GHG reductions.

▪ **C Speed Advanced Technology Manufacturing Center Expansion**

C Speed, LLC researches, develops and manufactures high technology electronic systems for the Defense, Medical and Test and Measurement markets. C Speed will soon launch the first radar in the world to economically mitigate wind turbine interference.

▪ **Community Rental Housing Program**

The Development Authority of the North Country, in partnership with the Fort Drum Regional Liaison Organization, Jefferson County, and the Jefferson County IDA, administers the Community Rental Housing Program, to incentivize development of rental housing in the Fort Drum area (primarily Jefferson County).

▪ **Community Transformation Tourism Fund (CTTF)**

The CTTF will be a program available to tourism related business. This fund will provide no interest loans to be repaid over ten years offering loan forgiveness if certain targets are met. It will be a performance driven fund. Jobs created, new municipal and county taxes generated, and new private investment dollars will be its measurement tools. The Adirondack Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) will administer this transformational fund.

- **Gouverneur Water Project (Kinney Drugs Distribution)**
 Kinney Drugs (and its subsidiary firms) has rapidly expanded from a local drug store chain to a nationally prominent entity in terms of retail, institution and mail order pharmaceutical management. It employs over 350 people at its warehouse and distribution center and the value of its inventory in the warehouse exceeds \$14 million. Lack of sufficient water pressure in the eastern portion of the Village has compromised the fire suppression system at the warehouse to the point that the cost of insurance is threatening the continued viability of this operation in the region. The Village wants to expand the capacity of the water mains in this end of the Village.
- **KRAFT Replacement Fill Line**
 The project will install new a fill line, upgrading the capability and technology to support associated production equipment. The project will support the purchase of an additional 50 million pounds of milk, purchase of 1 million cases from NY companies, and the trucking industry with over 500 loads of finished goods.
- **LED Lighting Technology**
 Ephesus Technology is working with Anson Inc in Ogdensburg to develop commercially applicable LED lighting technology. The technology's competitive advantages include energy efficiency and quality of light while the company's advantage rests in the ability to maximize energy usage in lighting fixtures while reducing heat.
- **Lyons Falls Mill Redevelopment**
 The Lewis County Development Corporation will collaborate with a private hydroelectric producer for the multi-phased redevelopment of a brownfield site that will allow for a \$30 million expansion of a hydrofacility and initiate a long-term community revitalization effort. Phase one of this project will include remediation of hazardous materials, engineering preparation for demolition and permitting for demolition. Once complete, the project will make adaptive reuse of an abandoned property that would accommodate new uses such as greenhouse and biofuel facilities.
- **Mobile Food Processing**
 North County Pastured plans to utilize mobile slaughtering to expand the diversity and value of production agriculture within the region. There is both local and national demand for meats that are produced naturally and harvested humanely and this effort focuses as a first phase on that demand and market potential with a specific focus on poultry. A subsequent second phase will focus on red meat slaughter, processing and packaging.
- **Newton Falls Rail Restoration Project**
 The Newton Falls Rail Project will rehabilitate and reopen the 46.25 mile Newton Falls Rail Line. This project will restore and enhance the most efficient, environmentally-friendly and reliable form of transportation, at the most cost-effective price, to service the paper mill at Newton Falls and the operations at Benson Mines. Newton Falls Fine Paper is poised to make a \$ 60 million investment in rebuilt papermaking machinery and conversion of the heating system to biomass for the mill and needs reliable rail service.
- **North Country Brand**

This project will create a regional brand that communicated the unique identity of the seven county region, attracting new visitors, residents, entrepreneurs, and investment, and opening new access to markets for the region's businesses and organizations.

- **ReEnergy (Black River Generation Facility)**

This project will convert the former coal burning generation facility at Fort Drum into a 50 MW biomass facility.

- **Rural Hamilton County Broadband**

This project will install both middle mile and last mile fiber optic facilities to provide broadband service several communities in Hamilton County, which currently have no existing broadband capacity as defined by the FCC.

- **Strand Theater Restoration**

This project is the restoration of the 1924 Strand theatre to the Strand Performing Arts Center in downtown Plattsburgh. The total restoration cost is \$3.7 million and the project is currently 40 percent complete.

- **Trudeau Institute Medical Research Team Recruitment**

The Trudeau Institute is a biomedical health organization that focuses on the eradication of infectious and inflammatory disease through basic research aimed at the development of vaccines and immune-based therapeutics. The organization intends to recruit and establish four faculty level scientists and their research teams at the Institute's Saranac Lake research campus who will attract competitive funding from the National Institutes of Health and related organizations.