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**NORTHEAST RURAL BROADBAND TAKES AN ACTIVE ROLE IN BRINGING BROADBAND TO UNSERVED AREAS OF NORTHEASTERN NC.**

*Technology viewed as a “game-changer” for economically challenged small towns.*

EDENTON, NC – Northeast Rural Broadband (NERB) is beginning work with rural communities in northeastern NC to ensure they are able to deploy “Last Mile” high-speed broadband coverage.

NERB was recently involved in the review process that led to selection of ECC Technologies, the company which will market a statewide \$105 million “Middle Mile” fiber build. NERB will work with ECC to identify an initial sub-section of 2-3 counties within northeastern NC. These communities will be among the first to receive specialized planning assistance from ECC Technologies and a draft broadband deployment strategy.

“The economic, educational and health opportunities represented by high-speed broadband, particularly for smaller rural communities, cannot be overstated,” says NERB Chairman, Rear Admiral Noel Preston (US Navy Ret), “The main objective of our not-for-profit organization is to make sure the underserved areas of the northeast region have access to affordable, reliable high-speed broadband. We look forward to working with the northeastern communities and ECC Technologies to realize ‘Last Mile’ solutions that accomplish this objective.”

The discussion of “Last Mile” options is only made possible because of the organization MCNC, which earlier secured primary funding through the Golden LEAF Foundation and the federal stimulus program, BTOP, to develop a 2,500 mile fiber broadband network throughout the state known as the “Middle Mile.” The Middle Mile is often likened to a highway with a few off ramps but no roads to get to individual homes and businesses, thus the need for the Last Mile.

To bridge the Last Mile, groups like NERB and the Northeast Commission, an economic development organization for the area, recognize an absolute need for community outreach and involvement.

"MCNC and the Golden LEAF Rural Broadband Initiative are providing our area with a great foundation to build on, but it will be up to our communities to realize the full potential," according to Paul Tine, the Northeast Commission's Logistics Committee Chair.

Northeast Rural Broadband is well positioned to help communities meet the challenges ahead and welcomes the support of key groups.

"Northeast North Carolina was a natural place to focus one of our initial pilot projects," stated Joe Freddoso, CEO of MCNC. "The region has long been identified as having a large concentration of underserved areas as well as significant economic challenges. We have been impressed with Northeast Rural Broadband's existing outreach programs and their commitment. All told this looks like the right place to start."

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