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New Tool Developed to Help Improve High-Speed Internet Access in Northeast Michigan

Otsego County, MI (October 29, 2019) – The Northeast Michigan Council of Governments (NEMCOG), in partnership with Connected Nation Michigan, just completed an important milestone in its efforts to improve broadband (high-speed internet) access across Northeast Michigan: a vertical asset inventory.

“A major obstacle in the region to not only our local economy but also our quality of life is the inaccessibility of high-speed internet in many areas of the region,” said Diane Rekowski, Executive Director, NEMCOG. “This Vertical Asset Inventory assists internet service providers (ISPs) in locating towers for possible internet service deployment. Our thanks to CN Michigan for completing the inventory, field work, and web portal. All of us within the Northeast Michigan Council of Governments are extremely grateful that this important tool is completed and now available to those who can help expand access to local residents and businesses.”

The project was funded through the Michigan Prosperity Initiative and Michigan Department of Agriculture. The purpose of the project was to provide an asset inventory in the NEMCOG region aimed at identifying and cataloging public and privately held assets that are available for the location and expansion of high-speed internet infrastructure.

“Access to broadband infrastructure is critical for Michigan and its rural communities, regions, residents, and businesses as they strive to compete on a global scale,” said Tom Stephenson, Community Technology Advisor, CN Michigan. “Just as water and sewer, electricity, and telephone utilities have their place in community and economic development, access to broadband has become the 21st century’s most critical infrastructure.”

Many rural regions suffer an inequitable Digital Divide compared to more densely populated areas. As of September 2017, nearly 36 percent of households in the NEMCOG region do not have access to high-speed internet service at the current Federal Communications Commission-defined speed.

“We understand that we cannot allow families, businesses, and whole communities in Northeast Michigan to continue to be left out of the same opportunities so many others enjoy,” said Steve Schnell, Community and Economic Development Senior Planner, NEMCOG. “Kids need access to do their homework, young adults need it to apply for jobs and colleges, seniors need it to access their health care records, and businesses

need it to compete locally and globally. This is not something that we can be passive about, and this inventory is one way for NEMCOG to provide opportunities for expanding our broadband networks.”

Providers, residents, and businesses can find the interactive tool that identifies Vertical Assets and Broadband in Northeast Michigan by heading to this link:

<http://www.discovernortheastmichigan.org/broadband.asp>.

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About Connected Nation Michigan: CN Michigan is a local division of the national nonprofit Connected Nation. Our mission is to improve lives by providing innovative solutions that expand access to and increase the adoption and use of broadband (high-speed internet) and its related technologies for all people. Everyone belongs in a Connected Nation.

Connected Nation works with consumers, local community leaders, states, technology providers, and foundations to develop and implement technology expansion programs with core competencies centered on a mission to improve digital inclusion for people and places previously underserved or overlooked. For more information, please visit: connectednation.org and follow Connected Nation on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).