Executive Summary of BIP and BTOP Project:

This project will bring terrestrial broadband to the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe. The project will provide access to broadband service to consumers residing in "unserved areas"; provide broadband education, awareness, training access, equipment and support to schools, libraries, medical providers, and community support organizations, support greater use of broadband service (see computer laboratory and sustainable adoption proposals.)

The Mohawk Territory of Akwesasne is located on the international border between Canada and the United States. It has been the home of Mohawks and other Haudenosaunee (Iroquois tribes) of the St. Lawrence for thousands of years. The Mohawks settled in the Akwesasne region in 1755, near a Catholic mission named St. Regis. The Tribe resides on both sides of the Canadian and United States border. The Canadian Mohawk reserve is 11,711 acres and the United States Mohawk reservation is 14,648 acres. The total territory is about 21 square miles. There are approximately 1500 households in the New York Mohawk community, served by approximately 1600 residential and business lines.

The Mohawk Tribe is a rural and poor community. Nearly 20 percent of Mohawk families live below the poverty line. A third of families with children under 5 years of age live in poverty. 30 percent of families are headed by a woman with no husband present. Unemployment is nearly 35% among residents aged 19 years or older.

Yet the Mohawk community places a high value on education. Nearly 200 Akwesasne youth are enrolled in universities and colleges, the highest number among the Confederacy tribes.

The Tribe also holds a strong tradition of entrepreneurship, with nearly 300 businesses in the combined community and 180 in the U.S. side.

The community has no terrestrial broadband. Efforts to bring broadband connectivity to the community to support tribal education, public safety, enterprise, cultural preservation and governance needs have led to a dead-end. Two years ago, the Tribe met with the tribal regulatory provider to ascertain when Akwesasne would attain Broadband service. The provider said that there are 104 communities awaiting deployment of a wire-center—in the previous three years, three new wire-centers were built—and Akwesasne was not on that list.
The Tribe therefore proposes a middle-mile fiber optic broadband project to bring nearly 37 miles of broadband to the community, with a 9 mile link to the 700-mile Open Access Telecommunications Network (OATN) in Massena, New York. This middle-mile network will enable last mile and local providers to push retail services to the home and business. This proposed middle-mile network (the —Mohawk Network||, —MoNet||) will connect over 30 anchor institutions, including 20 government buildings, the community library/cultural museum, the community senior center, Health Clinic, Boys & Girls Club, Headstart center, and anchor tribal enterprises.

The Mohawk Network will have a regional impact also. Aside from connecting with and aggregating nearly 1300 miles of broadband capacity with the Open Access Telecommunications Network to the Tribe’s west and the proposed 500-mile Community Broadband Network to the southeast of the Tribe, the Tribe has also proposed broadband extension to neighboring communities. The St. Regis Mohawk Tribe has engaged Massena, Ft. Covington, and Bombay in discussions on connecting their communities. These communities are part of a traditional economic development base in the North Country. It is hoped that extending broadband regionally will revive business recovery and North Country will be regarded as a sustainable economic market for investing in. (The St. Regis Mohawk Tribe has also been in discussions with Massena to bring a fiber optic connection to Massena’s hospital).

To attain universal access to broadband in Akwesasne, the tribe is sensitive that many residents can not afford residential broadband service. Therefore, St. Regis will also be applying for funding in the BTOP public computers program. The Tribe will be aggressively expanding public access to computers in both traditional and non-traditional sites to provide a variety of public computer access points for tribal residents.

In addition, recognizing that the community may not know the full potential of broadband applications and how to get help with access, the Tribe will be applying for BTOP funding to develop innovative sustainable adoption strategies. These innovative adoption strategies include a community-wide public safety high-speed mobile data access system; provision of telemedicine and distance learning programs with BTOP funded equipment; a smart-grid adoption plan conjoined with the planned tribal takeover of the community’s power utility service, and use of technologies such as digital sign boards and smart boards to bring information to tribal members and bring the community together.
Mohawk Net will sell wholesale broadband capacity within the tribal community and to all open access customers—without discrimination—seeking transport to, through and from the tribal region. Its commercial model will closely adopt the successful business strategies of the Open Access Telecommunications Network (OATN.) To that end, the business model and sustainable financial projections for this proposal was prepared by the business consultant that developed OATN’s 450 mile launch.

Mohawk Network will be a redundant Ethernet over SONET network.

The Infrastructure proposal for the St. Regis will cost $4.82 million, with additional grant applications of $619,000 for BTOP funding for public computer laboratories, and $1.5 million for sustainable adoption projects.

The Tribe expects wholesale cumulative revenues for providing middle-mile broadband service to and through the community at $2.34 million by year 5. St. Regis also projects that Mohawk Net will trigger an upsurge of local and regional last-mile providers seeking to bring first-time local broadband connection to residents. By building an otherwise unaffordable middle-mile capacity and network to the Akwesasne region, the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe projects within 2 years of completion of Mohawk Net that 100% of the community will have access to broadband service.

The St. Regis Mohawk Tribe estimates that 10 permanent jobs and 20 temporary will be created in the community as a result of funding to build broadband infrastructure and to collocate new retail and wholesale services. Internet access will enable community residents to complete their GEDs, pursue continuing education and upgrade their professional certifications. A net job gain of 50 jobs may be achieved with the new broadband opportunities brought to the community. Up to 50 jobs in the community may be preserved with new businesses locating in the community and with existing businesses being able to remain viable with expanded market opportunities afforded through internet commerce. Finally, State University New York at Canton, Plattsburgh, Potsdam, and Clarkson University, and Alice Hyde Hospital have approached the tribe to establish distance learning courses in the community. These programs may enable the Tribe to keep skilled workers from leaving the community, enlarge a skilled labor pool, and contribute to the growing entrepreneurial base of the region.