



NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATURE

March 4, 2019

Hon. Andrew M. Cuomo
Executive Chamber
State Capitol, Second Floor
Albany, NY 12224

Acting Commissioner
NYS Department of Transportation
50 Wolf Road
Albany, NY 12232

Hon. Andrea Stewart-Cousins
Temporary President and Majority Leader
Room 907 LOB
Albany, NY 12247

Hon. Carl E. Heastie
Speaker of the Assembly
Room 932 LOB
Albany, NY 12248

Hon. John J. Flanagan
Senate Minority Conference Leader
Room 315 Capitol
Albany, NY 12247

Hon. Brian M. Kolb
Assembly Minority Conference Leader
Room 933 LOB
Albany, NY 12248

Hon. Timothy M. Kennedy
Chair, Senate Transportation Committee
Room 708 LOB
Albany, NY 12247

Hon. William B. Magnarelli
Chair, Assembly Transportation Committee
Room 830 LOB
Albany, NY 12248

Dear Governor Cuomo and Legislative Leaders:

For the seventh consecutive session, on behalf of local transportation leaders, municipalities, and taxpayers from throughout our respective legislative districts and across New York State, we appreciate this opportunity to address the urgent need for greater state investment in local roads, bridges, and culverts.

First, we will take this opportunity to reiterate our strong support for the PAVE-NY and BRIDGE-NY programs enacted as part of the 2016-17 state budget. These initiatives have provided invaluable funding for additional road paving, and bridge and culvert work for both the state and local systems, and we will look forward to their continuation this year and in future years.

Nevertheless, as we continue to address the sustainable future of New York's locally maintained transportation infrastructure, we must once again highlight the Consolidated Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS), which as you know makes the key difference for so many local communities, economies, governments, motorists, and taxpayers throughout the state.

We continue to value your commitment and leadership and, as we undertake negotiations on the 2019-20 state budget, we request your support once again. This year, more than ever before, we believe the opportunity exists to strengthen the success of the past and, most importantly, revitalize New York State's investment to address the tremendous, still unmet needs and challenges facing the effective maintenance and improvement of local roads, bridges, and culverts in every region of New York State.

Therefore, we once again proudly join our local leaders to issue this call for:

- increasing the annual CHIPS base funding level by \$150 million to a total of \$588 million. Local governments face increasingly difficult fiscal constraints due to the tax cap and, this year, the uncertainty surrounding Aid and Incentives to Municipalities (AIM) funding, and so the importance of a permanent increase of the CHIPS base funding level is paramount. We simply must make this fundamental investment in economic growth, job creation, and property tax relief; and
- restoring the \$65-million "Extreme Winter Recovery" allocation slated for elimination in the 2019-20 Executive Budget. This allocation has become essential to the ability of our municipalities to address local needs and, particularly within the context of another extreme winter season, fundamental to our state-level commitment.

We strongly believe this request is both warranted and attainable this year.

It is attainable, especially in the context of the Executive's call for a new \$150-billion infrastructure plan, including a new \$66-billion investment in transportation.

It is warranted. Local governments, for the foreseeable future, will continue to struggle to address budgetary demands in the face of the state-imposed property tax cap, rising pension and health care costs, and unfunded state mandates, among other burdens. Furthermore, despite the state's increased commitment to CHIPS since 2013, base aid has remained stagnant over the past seven years.

There is clearly a compelling case for New York State to take these proposed steps to address urgent local transportation and infrastructure shortcomings, and we believe it is simply the right thing to do.

In order to meet the critical investment level needed to maintain and improve local roads, bridges, and culverts, a stronger state-local partnership is the only answer.

In summary, consider the following:

- Local governments are responsible for maintaining nearly 87 percent of the roads in New York State and one-half of the state's 18,000 bridges;
- Drivers on local roads contribute nearly half of the gas taxes collected in New York State;
- Forty-eight percent of the vehicle miles traveled in New York are on local roads, yet less than 12 percent of the taxes and fees paid to the state by these drivers go back to maintaining local roads;
- Federal transportation aid to New York (FAST Act) is directed primarily to the National Highway System (interstates, principal arterials, and expressways), which means less funding reaching local systems;
- Estimates by the State Comptroller, state Department of Transportation (DOT), and other independent studies have shown a large number of local road mileage deteriorating and many local bridges rated structurally deficient or functionally obsolete;
- Thirty-six percent of bridges are deficient and 38 percent of road pavements are rated fair or poor, and getting worse;
- According to TRIP, a national transportation advocacy group, roads and bridges that are deficient, congested, or lack desirable safety features, cost New York motorists an additional \$24.9 billion annually — nearly \$2,300 per driver in some areas — due to higher vehicle operating costs, traffic accidents, and congestion-related delays;
- Although much has been mentioned about choosing projects that have a statewide economic development impact, we contend that businesses locate in towns, villages, and cities and, therefore, it is equally important to ensure local roads and bridges are maintained to spur economic development and job creation, while helping to control property taxes for individuals and businesses;
- Every \$1 invested in the CHIPS program is \$1 less the local property taxpayer has to pay. Additionally, every \$1 invested in the CHIPS program can save from \$6-\$14 in long-term rehabilitation costs. This state assistance benefits the middle class struggling with high local property taxes;
- How many first responders utilize local roads and bridges to get to an emergency or crisis? How many children and grandchildren are placed on school buses every morning and travel over local roads and bridges? It is troubling that we may be risking tragic accidents involving children, first responders, families, farmers, and motorists overall because we are not making the critical and necessary safety improvements to address this growing crisis;
- Our nationally and internationally recognized agriculture and tourism industries are equally dependent upon a well-maintained and viable local infrastructure. Going from a well-conditioned state road to a deteriorating local road or deficient bridge does not send the right message to our local visitors and farmers;

- Locally administered highway projects will result in business for local contractors and work crews that will provide local employment and economic opportunities;
- The State Comptroller further estimates there will be \$89 billion in unmet local infrastructure needs over the next 20 years. In an October 2017 report, the comptroller estimated that bridges owned by local governments currently need an estimated \$27.4 billion in repairs; and
- According to an analysis by the New York State Association of Town Superintendents of Highways, the local highway system faces an annual funding gap of \$1.3 billion.

Together with ongoing BRIDGE-NY and PAVE-NY allocations, the increase in CHIPS base line aid and the restoration of the “Extreme Winter Recovery” allocation will significantly strengthen the foundation we have successfully built over the last several state budgets and further solidify our fundamental belief that “Local Roads Matter!”

Through the renewed, vigorous, long-term state investment we have outlined, we will finally move toward the safe and reliable local infrastructure we envision, an infrastructure that will serve as the catalyst for future community and economic development, and job creation throughout our local communities.

Once again, thank you for your leadership and thoughtful consideration. We look forward to working with you to achieve these critical goals and make the 2019-20 New York State budget truly transformative for our local roads, bridges, and culverts.

Sincerely,



Thomas F. O'Mara
Senate District 58



Philip A. Palmesano
Assembly District 132

[See attached lists of all Senate and Assembly signees]

Summary of Senate Signees ~ CHIPS/Bridge/Culvert Funding

Senators:

Fred Akshar, 52nd SD
George A. Amedore, Jr., 46th SD
Robert E. Antonacci, 50th SD
Phil Boyle, 4th SD
Rich Funke, 55th SD
Patrick M. Gallivan, 59th SD
Joseph A. Griffo, 47th SD
Pamela Helming, 54th SD
Chris Jacobs, 60th SD
Daphne Jordan, 43rd SD
Andrew J. Lanza, 24th SD
Kenneth P. LaValle, 1st SD
Betty Little, 45th SD
Thomas F. O'Mara, 58th SD
Robert G. Ortt, 62nd SD
Michael H. Ranzenhofer, 61st SD
Patty Ritchie, 48th SD
Joseph E. Robach, 56th SD
Sue Serino, 41st SD
James L. Seward, 51st SD
James Tedisco, 49th SD
Catharine Young, 57th SD

Summary of Signatures for CHIPS/Bridge Funding (2019)

Assemblymembers:

Thomas J. Abinanti 92nd A.D.
Jake Ashby 107th A.D.
Will Barclay 120th A.D.
Kenneth D. Blankenbush 117th A.D.
Karl Brabenec 98th A.D.
Kevin M. Byrne 94th A.D.
Marjorie L. Byrnes 133rd A.D.
Kevin A. Cahill 103rd A.D.
Marcos A. Crespo 85th A.D.
Clifford W. Crouch 122nd A.D.
Michael DenDekker 34th A.D.
Joseph DeStefano 3rd A.D.
Erik Martin Dilan 54th A.D.
David J. DiPietro 147th A.D.
Anthony D'Urso 16th A.D.
Steve Englebright 4th A.D.
Gary D. Finch 126th A.D.
Michael J. Fitzpatrick 8th A.D.
Christopher Friend 124th A.D.
Sandra R. Galef 95th A.D.
Andrew Garbarino 7th A.D.
Joseph M. Giglio 148th A.D.
Andrew Goodell 150th A.D.
Aileen M. Gunther 100th A.D.
Stephen Hawley 139th A.D.
Jonathan Jacobson 104th A.D.
Mark Johns 135th A.D.
Ron Kim 40th A.D.
Brian M. Kolb 131st A.D.
Peter Lawrence 134th A.D.
Michael LiPetri 9th A.D.
Nicole Malliotakis 64th A.D.
Brian D. Manktelow 130th A.D.
David McDonough 14th A.D.
John Mikulin 17th A.D.
Brian D. Miller 101st A.D.
Melissa Miller 20th A.D.
Michael Montesano 15th A.D.
Angelo J. Morinello 145th A.D.
Michael J. Norris 144th A.D.
Philip A. Palmesano 132nd A.D.
Anthony H. Palumbo 2nd A.D.
Victor Pichardo 86th A.D.
Edward Ra 19th A.D.
Andrew P. Raia 12th A.D.
Michael W. Reilly, Jr. 62nd A.D.
Robert Rodriguez 68th A.D.

John J. Salka 121st A.D.
Angelo Santabarbara 111th A.D.
Robin L. Schimminger 140th A.D.
Colin Schmitt 99th A.D.
Douglas Smith 5th A.D.
Robert Smullen 118th A.D.
Daniel Stec 114th A.D.
Christopher Tague 102nd A.D.
Fred W. Thiele Jr. 1st A.D.
Mark Walczyk 116th A.D.
Mary Beth Walsh 112th A.D.