

May 27, 2020

Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor
State of New York
Executive Chamber
State Capitol Albany, New York 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

We listened with great interest to your May 26th daily briefing during which you urged the federal government to fully recognize the importance, effectiveness, and common sense of infrastructure development as a surefire way to create jobs and stimulate the economy.

We could not agree more – and we could not agree more that it would be an equally important way for New York State to truly begin jumpstarting local economies upstate and downstate. While your May 26th briefing largely focused on downstate initiatives and projects, we are confident that you fully recognize that local transportation infrastructure projects remain the lifeblood of so many upstate, rural economies.

Consequently, we appreciate this opportunity to urge your immediate attention to the urgent need of New York State's local transportation systems to begin moving forward with this summer's critical highway and bridge construction projects.

It is our understanding that this essential local highway and bridge work remains on hold awaiting the release of the \$743 million in local highway funding enacted as part of the 2020-2021 state budget, as well as the necessary state authorizations and official funding distribution runs that are required for counties to undertake this work.

As you know, over the past decade we have worked closely with county and town highway superintendents and local transportation leaders from throughout New York State to help lead the "Local Roads Matter" advocacy campaign that has continually highlighted the fundamental role that this system plays as a foundation of local economies.

Furthermore, we have appreciated working together with you and your administration to strengthen New York State's support for local roads, bridges, and culverts through the CHIPS, PAVE-NY, and BRIDGE-NY programs, as well as other capital programs and initiatives like the Extreme Winter Recovery allocations that have made an enormous difference for the quality and strength of local communities and local economies, and to help ease the burden on local property taxpayers.

Now that New York is beginning to reopen and as we all look forward to getting our local economies moving again, we believe it should be a top priority to maintain a strong state

commitment to local transportation infrastructure as one effective and commonsense way to reinvigorate economic sectors that have been hit so hard by the COVID-19 response.

Equally important, it is critical to recognize that delaying this essential work will have dire short- and long-term consequences for the overall local highway and bridge construction industry that supports thousands of livelihoods and serves as a crucial underpinning of local economic development and sustainability.

Our county and town highway departments, contractors, engineers, materials suppliers and the industry overall stands ready to get to work, proudly and willingly adhering to all of the necessary public health guidelines and safeguards, and we urge you to give the necessary go-ahead.

The Northeast construction season is short. New York State needs to release program funding for CHIPS, Extreme Winter Recovery, PAVE-NY, BRIDGE-NY, and all of our local transportation funding. The delay in making these announcements and authorizations is the source of great concern within local governments and the construction supply chain which is dependent on this state support.

To put it simply and straightforwardly, we do not believe New York State can afford to risk the consequences of a further prolonged slowdown in local road and bridge work.

Once again, we urge you to direct the state Department of Transportation to release the local transportation allocations and issue the CHIPS authorization letters to localities to get these projects and all of the benefits they produce moving again.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Thomas F. O'Mara
58th Senate District

Philip A. Palmesano
132nd Assembly District

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124th Assembly District

cc:

Marie Therese Dominguez, Commissioner, Department of Transportation
Robert F. Mujica Jr., Director, Division of the Budget