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## New York State County Highway Superintendents Association New York State Association of Town Superintendents of Highways Local Roads Matter! 2018-2019 Executive Budget -- Transportation

Good afternoon Chairperson Young, Chairperson Weinstein and other members of the Legislature's Fiscal Committees. I am Wayne E. Bonesteel, P.E., Rensselaer County Engineer and Co-Chair of the New York State County Highway Superintendents Association (NYSCHSA) Legislative Committee. With me is Bernhard Meyer, President of the New York State Association of Town Superintendents of Highways (NYSATSOH) and Town of Canaan Superintendent of Highways. We appreciate this opportunity to comment on the 2018-2019 Executive Budget as it relates to funding local transportation infrastructure.

As you know, our collective membership is responsible for ensuring the safe condition and operation of 87 percent of the state's public road mileage, half of its bridges and for snow plowing not only our huge system, but also over a quarter of the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) roads. Every time there is a weather event, the hardworking men and women on our local crews ensure New York's drivers can get to and from work, homes, schools, hospitals and other destinations safely.

### **THANK YOU**

We'd like to begin by thanking you for your steadfast support for funding local highway departments so that they are better able to replace, rehabilitate, pave, plow and maintain state and local roads, bridges and culverts when needed. Thanks to the Governor and Legislature's support, we now have essentially four programs that provide state and federal funds for local highway departments as part of the current 5 Year Transportation Capital Plan: CHIPS; Marchiselli (which helps localities meet the mandatory match for federal funding); PAVE NY; and BRIDGE NY. Also, the Legislature has provided additional funding several times by making one-time appropriations for Extreme Winter Recovery that this year distributes \$65M to local highway departments through the CHIPS formula. The 2018-2019 Executive Budget proposes to cut that vital \$65M appropriation.

## **CHIPS**

The Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS) as we all know is the financial lifeblood of any local highway department, distributing important and reoccurring state funding through a formula to every local government in the state. The 2018-2019 Executive Budget holds the base level for CHIPS at \$438M for the sixth year in a row after the Legislature championed the last increase of \$75M back in 2013. While providing a reliable reoccurring base amount of state funding for local roads and bridges over the last five-year period, CHIPS funds continue to fall short of what is needed to keep the locally-owned ailing and aging transportation system from falling further into a state of disrepair. Our Associations urge your support of an annual \$150M increase in the CHIPS base.

## **EXTREME WEATHER AND PAVE NY**

The addition by the legislature this year of \$65M in Extreme Winter Recovery reimbursement along with the third year \$100M appropriation for PAVE NY has helped to bridge the growing shortfall in CHIPS funding. Unlike CHIPS and the Extreme Winter Recovery funding, PAVE NY funding—to assist municipalities with rehabilitation and reconstruction of local highways and roads—is apportioned by NYSDOT according to the percentage of funds each municipality received under the CHIPS Program. Consideration should be given for this funding to be added to the CHIPS base and distributed through the CHIPS formula. In this way, the state can build upon a program that provides a fair distribution of funds to every municipality in the state through a standard formula while maximizing flexibility for local highway departments to direct this funding where it is needed most.

This is an approach to assisting local highway departments on which both our associations agree and urge that future Extreme Winter Recovery and PAVE NY funding be consolidated into the CHIPS base.

## **BRIDGE NY**

Phase I of the local portion of BRIDGE NY which includes the first two years' appropriation for the program made available \$200M designated specifically for local bridge and culvert work. We understand nearly 500 applications for funding for bridge and culvert projects under BRIDGE NY were submitted by counties, towns, cities and villages throughout the state. In Phase I, the value of project applications far exceeded what was available for each region of the state. Based on this experience, we made a case during your budget deliberations last year that the need for additional bridge and culvert funding is clearly justified and asked that more of the funding be directed for culverts.

As a result, Phase II of BRIDGE NY was allocated an additional \$50M bringing the two-year funding total for PHASE II to \$250M with \$50M of that amount to fund culverts. We greatly appreciate the Legislature and Governor agreeing to this increase in the final budget. Our associations are working with NYSDOT on evaluating the success of PHASE I

and if necessary will be urging improvements in the program that can be implemented as part of PHASE II.

### **THE NEED IS WELL DOCUMENTED**

According to NYSDOT's latest annual Highway Pavement and Bridge Condition Report, an additional 360 bridges became deficient between 2013 and 2015, as the number of deficient bridges jumped from 5,542 to 5,902. To be clear, pavement and bridge conditions in our state are getting worse. Every single region in the state saw an increase in poorly rated bridges over the past two years.

We've conducted our own needs study of the local transportation system. The analysis determined that on average local governments (excluding New York City) should be spending \$2.32 billion annually on their highways and bridges. Currently these municipalities spend about \$1 billion annually on these facilities, leaving an annual shortfall of \$1.32 billion, according to the State Comptroller.

### **CONCLUSION**

In previous years, even in tough economic times, the Legislature has responded to the dire conditions of the state's transportation systems and augmented CHIPS and other local transportation funding, but more is required to help address the deteriorating conditions of many of our local transportation system's infrastructure and make significant progress in its rehabilitation. As such, we ask that you support a \$150M increase in the CHIPS base in the 2018-2019 budget.

We recognize the challenges you face in finding the resources to address the needs of the vast, aging and deteriorating state and local infrastructure. Drinking water supplies, sewer systems, flood control and the upstate and downstate transit systems have all had critical problems due in part to underinvestment and deferred maintenance. The Governor has already committed to seeking an additional \$836M for the MTA to help fund a Phase 1 NYC subway stabilization plan and proposes meeting half this commitment in the Executive Budget; money that will be spent in just one region of the state. Should there be an increase in MTA funding in this next budget, the re-establishment of parity between the MTA and NYSDOT that many of you successfully fought for should mean a comparable funding boost in the NYSDOT Plan which would certainly provide an opportunity to enhance local transportation programs.

We are looking forward to working with you again in this state budget process and during the legislative session. Our associations and the mutual constituencies and communities we serve appreciate the support of our state elected officials who partner with us to insure we all "get the job done" when it comes to providing the public with a safe and functional statewide transportation system; one that supports jobs and economic growth for our communities.

Thank you.

January 25, 2018