



**TESTIMONY OF MATTHEW J. DRISCOLL
ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
NEW YORK STATE THRUWAY AUTHORITY**

**2019 JOINT HEARING OF THE LEGISLATIVE FISCAL COMMITTEES - TRANSPORTATION
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 30, 2019**

Chairs Krueger, Weinstein, Kennedy and Magnarelli and distinguished members of the Senate and Assembly Fiscal and Transportation Committees; thank you for having me here today. My name is Matthew Driscoll and I am the Acting Executive Director for the New York State Thruway Authority.

The Governor Thomas E. Dewey Thruway is a 570-mile superhighway spanning New York State, and is one of the longest toll systems in the United States. Underscoring its importance to the state, region and nation, our preliminary figures for 2018 indicate that Thruway customers traveled approximately 8.3 billion vehicle-miles on the highway, averaging roughly 23 million vehicle-miles per day. In addition to being the principal artery of travel and commerce within New York connecting many of our state's major cities,

the Thruway is a vital link to long distance interstate travel and provides the major route of access for visitors to our state's tourism anchors, including Niagara Falls, the Finger Lakes, the Adirondacks, the Catskills and New York City.

The 2019 Thruway Authority budget represents a total financial commitment of \$1.65 billion. In 2019, it is anticipated that the Thruway Authority will replace or rehabilitate 16 bridges and improve approximately 141 lane miles of roadway. It is a budget that is balanced; provides the necessary resources to keep our patrons safe while maintaining our facilities and maximizes funding for critical infrastructure projects in our multi-year Capital Plan. In fact, our credit rating was just upgraded by Moody's for the first time in 22 years.

I'd like to update you on the progress of the New NY Bridge Project, which is one of our nation's largest infrastructure projects, and a national model of design-build construction. Both spans of the Governor Mario. M. Cuomo Bridge are now open to traffic while work continues on the bicycle and pedestrian path, a one-of-its-kind 3.6 mile pedestrian trail, connecting

Rockland and Westchester Counties. This project remains within its budget of \$3.98 billion.

The 2019 Executive Budget includes a re-appropriation of nearly \$2 billion from the Special Infrastructure Account for the Thruway Stabilization Program. These funds will continue to support capital investments including the bridge and other projects throughout the system. We appreciate your continued support of the bridge project and the recognition of our system-wide capital needs. This support enables tolls to remain at current levels through 2020.

The Authority continues to move the state forward with its implementation of cashless tolling. To date, we have completed work at Grand Island, Harriman, Spring Valley, New Rochelle and the Yonkers barriers...the remainder of the ticketed system will be complete by the end of 2020.

In 2018, the Thruway Authority initiated an aggressive education and marketing campaign to support current and future cashless tolling implementation. This campaign to educate and promote E-ZPass usage began in Western New York with an ad featuring former Buffalo Bills Running

Back Thurman Thomas, and the sales of E-ZPass tags at our cash toll lanes. We expanded this campaign across the state setting up information tables at festivals, street fairs, farmer's markets, the NYS Fair, and Thruway service areas to sell E-ZPass tags and provide information and answer questions. This resulted in the sale of 197,425 E-ZPass tags in 2018, a 51 percent increase in sales from 2017.

In addition to educating the public and improving our marketing of cashless tolling and E-ZPass, we've pushed our contractor to upgrade customer service operations of the Tolls by Mail system to make the website easier to navigate and pay tolls; to enhance the look and added information to the toll bill envelope; to increase customer service phone capacity and support staff; and to improve signage around our existing cashless tolling locations. This focused action and accountability plan will continue going forward.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the talented men and women of the Thruway Authority for their dedication and professionalism in bringing the highest standards of safety and reliability across the Thruway system. Those that work out on the roadway each day are key to our success, and they deserve to have a safe work environment as much as any other employee.

To that end, Governor Cuomo has proposed in his Executive Budget, a public awareness campaign for motorists highlighting the importance of highway work zone safety. This initiative aims to reduce the number of highway work zone incidents resulting from speeding, intrusions into work zones, and any other conduct resulting in injuries to our highway workers. Increasing public awareness about highway work zone safety protects not only the men and women who work on our roadways, but also motorists who travel every day.

In closing, please know that I am personally committed to ensuring that the Thruway Authority continues to play a vital role in the state's economic expansion. We strive to empower ingenuity and innovation by demonstrating the impact that an effective and responsive government can have on the lives of its residents. Thank you for your time. I'm happy to respond to any questions you may have.

