

**Testimony of
Commissioner Marie Therese Dominguez
New York State Department of Transportation
Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on FY 2024 Executive Budget
February 6, 2023**

Introduction

Good afternoon, Chairpersons Krueger, Weinstein, Kennedy and Magnarelli, members of the Legislative Finance, Ways and Means, and Transportation Committees, and members of the State Legislature that have joined us today. On behalf of Governor Kathy Hochul, I'd like to thank you for inviting me here to talk about the State Department of Transportation, our people, the communities that we serve, and how the work that we do makes a real and positive difference in the lives of all New Yorkers.

I would like to first take a moment to salute our dedicated DOT workforce, particularly our snow and ice team, who work tirelessly to make sure that our roads and bridges are safe. This season alone, they have already cleared more than 3.4 million lane miles of roads. As you know, our state was hit with a historic lake-effect snowstorm in November that brought a record seven feet of snow to Buffalo and the North Country, only to be followed by another historic and tragic storm in December which brought 37 hours of treacherous blizzard conditions.

During both events, hundreds of dedicated public servants at DOT - from across the state - worked 24/7 for days, to help clear the snow and restore the roadways. I was in Buffalo for both storms, and I personally want to thank the members of our DOT team and everyone assisted for their service – it was heroic.

Major Accomplishments and Challenges

But DOT is not just in the snow and ice business. Simply put, there is not a community in New York State that DOT doesn't directly touch. And thanks to Governor Hochul's leadership and your continued commitment to making smart and significant investments in our transportation infrastructure, New York is investing more in its infrastructure than at any time in history. The Governor's \$32.8 billion five-year Capital Plan is historic and the projects we are advancing represent more than just concrete and steel – they are investments to better the lives of individuals and communities across New York. This last year, DOT has put these dollars to work to carry out the Governor's vision of enhancing the quality of life for all New Yorkers - by making our communities more livable, walkable, bikeable - better places to live, work and raise a family.

The Executive budget continues the unprecedented State support for local municipal governments to renew and modernize their roads and bridges. All one has to do is visit places like the Village of Montour Falls to immediately see DOT's positive impact on local communities over the past year. Our projects, large and small are transformational to the people we serve, and in that vein, this year DOT is advancing a number of signature projects to reconnect and revitalize communities such as the Kensington and Cross Bronx Expressways, Interstate 81, the Livingston Avenue Bridge, and Hunts Point. These are multigenerational investments that will fundamentally change for the better, places like East Buffalo, the South Bronx, South Syracuse, and the City of Albany.

When businesses look to locate in a certain area, one of the first things they look at is the state of the infrastructure. Infrastructure investment leads to economic development - we see it all over the country – and we're seeing it play out in communities across New York as well.

Despite the challenges of extreme weather and climate change and the ups and downs of the economy, inflation, and the supply chain, DOT remains fully committed to the implementation of the Governor's Capital Plan.

The Capital Plan

Over the past year, we have had great success in executing on the first year of the capital plan, completing more than 430 bridge rehabilitations and replacements on the state system and funding more than 150 such projects on the local bridge network. Direct support for local roads and bridges has increased to more than \$6.1 billion over five years of the capital plan, an increase of nearly \$2.5 billion from the previous five-year plan, with \$1 billion alone invested in local aid programs last year. This level of investment in our local highway and bridge programs is unprecedented.

The five-year capital plan also helped us make critical investments in aviation, freight rail, and transit including \$230 million to enhance nine regional airports upstate, and \$76.4 million for freight rail projects. The plan also supports passenger rail service, providing \$44 million annually for four routes, and supporting expanded service on the Ethan Allen and Maple Leaf lines.

Here's a sample of what DOT is working to accomplish in FY2023:

- 1,353 lane miles of pavement on State roads will be constructed or improved.
- 589 total state bridges will be rehabilitated or replaced.
- 352 projects at a total construction cost of almost \$2.9 billion will have been let.
- And more than \$8 billion will support transit systems statewide, including both on and off-budget resources, which was critical to providing alternative modes of transportation to the public.

Safety and Connectivity

We're also making key investments in safety and connectivity, which are cornerstones of the Governor's transportation vision for the future, which is why we are building off our decade of experience in implementing Complete Streets projects statewide.

New legislation signed by the Governor in December encourages localities to do the same. And this year, DOT will also be developing a statewide Active Transportation Plan to further our efforts toward enhancing safety for all users of the transportation network. Stakeholder outreach on the plan will begin in the coming months, which will help inform future investments in active transportation including pedestrian and bicycle facilities. The Plan will advance guidance and recommendations for development, which will in turn will help enhance safety and improve access to multi-modal connections throughout the state.

Climate Action and Resiliency

Multi-modal transportation also plays a key role in reducing our carbon footprint under the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act. DOT played a key role in helping develop the Scoping Plan and we are committed to the recommendations put forward by the Climate Action Council in the Final Scoping Plan, which was adopted in December of last year.

For Fiscal Year 2024, the state builds on its record of investing in transit, by providing \$9.1 billion in mass transit operating support, including \$809 million in operating support for non-MTA transit operators.

Over the next five years, New York State will receive \$175 million from the Federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill for the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure program or NEVI program. Under this program, DOT is taking the lead to help increase the electric vehicle charging infrastructure on our interstate highways.

Smart climate policies also mean building a resilient infrastructure for the future, as the more we invest now in hardening our infrastructure, the more we will be able to withstand the effects of extreme weather on our roads, bridges and culverts. At DOT we are currently building infrastructure designed to last at least 75 years. To ensure longevity for our projects, we use the most resilient building materials available, including high-performance concrete on our roads and stainless-steel reinforcement on our bridges. Of note, two Van Wyck Expressway viaducts in Queens were recently constructed to accommodate a 128-degree temperature change over the course of the year. And with the passage of the Environmental Bond Act, more opportunities will be available across the state to make our transportation system more resilient.

Conclusion

What I've laid out today is just a small sample of the work our team at the Department of Transportation undertakes each day. The operations and maintenance of our transportation system, snow and ice, resiliency and climate, and investments in roads, bridges, planes, trains, buses, bike, ped and equity and accessibility to transportation for all – these are all elements of our critical safety mission that NYSDOT carries out each day. But I saved the best for last: the thousands who work for the Department of Transportation - the dedicated women and men who wear many hats and face unique challenges every day. Over the last few years, DOT staff have confronted and overcome every challenge that has been put in front of them. Our people are our most valuable asset and truly, our “secret sauce.” Their work represents the best in public service, and I count myself lucky to be a member of Team DOT. Thank you again for having me here today.

I am happy to answer your questions.

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