

**TESTIMONY OF BILL FINCH
ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
NEW YORK STATE THRUWAY AUTHORITY**

**2017 JOINT HEARING OF THE LEGISLATIVE FISCAL COMMITTEES -
TRANSPORTATION
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2017**

Chairperson Young, Chairperson Farrell, and members of the Senate and Assembly Fiscal and Transportation Committees; thank you for having me here today. My name is Bill Finch 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 crossing New York State, and is one of the longest toll superhighway systems in the United States. Approximately 250 million vehicles travel more than 8 billion miles on the Thruway each year. In addition to being the principal artery of travel and commerce within New York connecting many of the State's principal cities, the Thruway is a vital link to long distance interstate travel. In addition, the Thruway provides the major route of access for visitors to the State's tourism anchors, including Niagara Falls, the Finger Lakes, the Adirondacks, the Catskills and New York City.

I want to begin with recognizing that the New NY Bridge project, one of the largest and safest active bridge projects in the nation, has been and continues to be the national model of design-build construction. I am happy to report that it is on track to open in 2018 and is currently on budget at \$3.98 billion. In December

2016, Governor Cuomo celebrated the topping off of the eight main span towers, a milestone moment. As of January 2017, more than 1,000 piles have been installed in the Hudson River and approximately 90 percent of support structures have been placed, which includes 126 massive steel girder assemblies.

The 2018 Executive Budget includes a reappropriation of nearly \$2 billion from the Special Infrastructure Account for the Thruway Stabilization program. This money will continue to support capital investments including the New NY Bridge and other capital projects throughout the system. We are grateful for the continuing support of the New NY Bridge project and the recognition of our system-wide capital needs. This support enables tolls to remain frozen at current levels until at least 2020.

The Executive Budget also includes making permanent the Infrastructure Investment Act that is set to expire this year. This proposal will enable the Thruway Authority to continue using design-build contracting, which is a driving force behind the New NY Bridge project.

The Executive Budget, in order to ensure that all motorists using the Thruway pay their fair share, includes making the intentional non-payment of tolls a “theft of service.” It allows DMV to enter into reciprocity agreements with other states and provinces to go after toll scofflaws, and it increases penalties for obscuring license plates – a tactic frequently used by toll evaders.

The overall 2017 Thruway Authority budget represents a total financial commitment of \$1.8 billion. It is a budget that is balanced; provides the necessary

resources to keep our patrons safe and maintain our facilities and assets. It maximizes funding for critical infrastructure projects in the Authority's multi-year Capital Plan and our comprehensive efforts will improve operations. This budget reflects our long-term commitment to keep the Thruway Authority on a sound fiscal footing.

In closing, let me take this opportunity to acknowledge our employee's hard work, dedication and ongoing commitment to the highest standards of safety and reliability in every area of our operation. I also want to extend a special thanks to Canal Corporation Director Brian Stratton, New York Power Authority (NYPA) President and Chief Executive Officer Gil Quiniones and all of the Canal, Thruway Authority and NYPA employees that worked tirelessly to ensure a smooth and efficient transfer of the Canal Corporation.

Thank you for your time. I would be happy to respond to any questions you may have.

