



First, I would like to first thank Assembly and Senate Transportation Committee Chairs Magnarelli and Kennedy, as well as Ranking Members Norris and Oberacker, for affording me the opportunity to provide testimony and advocate on behalf of the residents of Putnam County which is a key part New York State's Department of Transportation's Region 8, north of Westchester County, south of Dutchess County, connected to both the Hudson River and the NY/CT state lines with both the Harlem and Hudson Metro-North lines running through it.

As a former member of the Assembly who served on both Transportation as well as the Ways & Means Committees, I spent several years in your chairs during the state's budget process which is where I also observed firsthand the important impact that New York State and the Department of Transportation has through partnering with and assisting local and county governments with their infrastructure needs. In 2018, I co-chaired the Assembly Minority Conference's Task Force on Transportation & Critical Infrastructure with my friend and colleague Assemblyman Phil Palmesano. That year, we gained greater insight into the needs of our state's transportation system and how we can accomplish more by working together with our local partners. I'm proud that several of the concepts and findings supported by that task force have since become reality.

During my tenure in the Assembly, I witnessed state legislators, from both political parties regardless of who was in the majority, speak out in favor of increased and sustainable state funding for local roads. This would be observed at budget hearings, but also every year at the annual "Local Roads Are Essential" or "Local Roads Matter" advocacy days when members of the Association of County Highway Superintendents and Town Superintendents of Highways visited us in Albany. It's an annual fight. The Governor introduces the Executive Budget, and it's our allies in the state legislature who fight to restore funding to previous budget levels. It seems that this year, we will once again be forced to call upon our friends in the Legislature seeking your assistance, to restore \$60 million in funding cuts from this year's Executive Budget for critical Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS) funding.

Last year, Putnam County received over \$1.2 million alone in CHIPS funding. That's \$1.2 million that would have otherwise been raised by property taxes if not for the state assistance. It would be a blow to our Department of Public Works (DPW), as well as the highway departments for our local towns and villages who also received CHIPS funding, if we were to take a step backwards in this critical support used for projects throughout our county.

The need for infrastructure repair and improvements never ceases, even as we continue to combat inflation and the financial impact felt by all county budgets due to last year's claw-back of federal Medicaid dollars (eFMAP) from the previous state budget. It was reassuring to see other local transportation aid remains the same in Governor Hochul's Executive Budget as the

year prior, but I respectfully request that Legislature's support to provide additional funding for programs like Bridge-NY, Extreme Winter Recovery, Pave-NY, and Pave our Potholes.

Each of these programs have the added benefit of not only supporting local governments directly, but assisting our schools, emergency first responders, economic development, hospitals, and countless other services and programs that depend on a sound and safe transportation system to properly function.

I learned from my time in the state Legislature on the Transportation Committee that state-wide, nearly nine out of every ten roads in the state are maintained under local jurisdiction, totaling more than 97,000 centerline miles owned by local governments compared to just over 15,000 lane miles owned by the State. Additionally, of the nearly 17,500 bridges in the state, more than half, over 8,000 of them are owned by local governments.

In little Putnam County, serving just under 100,000 people, our county government is responsible for maintaining 83 culverts, 31 bridges, and 116 center lane miles of county roadway. That's excluding our inter-municipal agreements where we also assist other outside agencies, including NYSDOT, with snow and plow operations. And as part of region 8 in the NYSDOT, our proximity to New York City and other high population areas intensifies the beating our infrastructure gets through high traffic. We're not complaining about the business because we want people to come to Putnam County, shop in Putnam County, so they can visit, fall in love, and stay in this beautiful state, the way so many of our residents have for generations. That said, this traffic does generate a cost for greater maintenance- for Putnam County and the greater Hudson Valley region.

As a former member of the Assembly Minority Conference's Task Force on Transportation & Critical Infrastructure, I toured the state and sat at multiple public hearings with local officials and interested stakeholders in various related industries. We listened and issued a report with numerous solutions to solve short and long-term concerns. This included increasing CHIPS funding by \$100 million each year for a five span, increasing Bridge-NY funding to \$500 million per year, establishing a culvert funding formula, tying CHIPS funding to the Consumer Price Index to account for inflation, and give localities greater flexibility on their usage of CHIPS funding. I would ask members of the Assembly and Senate Transportation Committee reassess these requests and continue working together with county and local governments to improve our roads and infrastructure.

While it is my intention in this testimony to speak on behalf of the residents of Putnam County and seek greater assistance to our transportation needs, I would be remiss if I did not draw attention to the great work and collaboration between Putnam County and the NYS Department of Transportation. This includes the completion last Fall of a resurfacing project on Route 52 in the Towns of Carmel and part of Kent between Fowler Ave and Route 311.

There is still a significant portion of Route 52 unrepaired in the Town of Kent from Route 311 to the Dutchess County border which left many of us concerned. That's why I was pleased to recently hear the news from Assemblyman Slater, who represents five of the six towns within Putnam County, that NYSDOT has scheduled and plans to complete the job and repair Route 52 to the Dutchess County line with by Fall 2025.

With that said, I believe it is important we continue to innovate and reconsider the most effective ways to carry out projects in order to extend their life and save taxpayer money in the long run. In 2018, Route 6 received a much-needed resurfacing and repair in the heart of Carmel. During that year's Transportation Budget Hearing, I raised this issue directly to then Acting Commissioner Paul Karas and brought visuals showing the road in disrepair. The project was completed, and I and the residents of Putnam County remain grateful. However, six years later, that resurfaced portion of the road is in need of regular patching. All levels of government need to continue developing best practices to maintain and preserve their existing infrastructure.

Similar to Route 6 then, I would like to draw attention today for the state to focus its attention on the needs of Route 301. This state road connects the western and eastern sides of Putnam County and is a main connector to the Taconic State Parkway. As a former volunteer firefighter and EMT for the Kent Fire Department that served this area, I know the road is routinely featured as a destination route for motorcycles to visit for scenic rides. Significant portions of this road have to be repaved. I ask that the NYS DOT work to begin the process of rehabilitating this vital transportation artery and look forward to further communication with the appropriate stakeholders to make this a reality.

We have seen what can be achieved when our state and local governments work together. As a lifetime Putnam County resident who grew up in Putnam Valley, I saw firsthand the need for the creation of the Pudding Street Overpass bridge over the Taconic Parkway. For decades, school buses would actually have to cross both sides of the Taconic to take students to and from the Putnam Valley School. This project dated back to Governor George Pataki, to Congress members Sue Kelly, John Hall, and Sean Maloney as well as Assemblman Katz and state Senators Leibell, Ball, Gipson, and Serino. After more than 20 years of planning and local advocacy the Pudding Street Overpass was finally completed in 2021. My former colleague and current Dutchess County Executive Sue Serino played a critical role getting this project off the ground during her tenure in the Senate, and I would be remiss if I did not give her the recognition she deserves.

Since my time serving in the Assembly, I appreciated the diligence and responsiveness of the NYS DOT, now led by Commissioner Marie Therese Dominguez and Region 8 Regional Director Lance MacMillan, and I thank them both. Upon taking office as County Executive last year, my administration was faced with a stalled bridge and road project on a county road that was a major disruption to the lives of residents on the western side of the County. The project, which had come to a complete standstill, was 80% funded with Federal and State dollars. I would like to thank the DOT for working with the county as we weighed our options and developed a plan that got the project back on track with an expected completion date for later this year.

Additionally, the Putnam County DPW worked this year to redesign its website, making it more transparent and user-friendly for residents looking for the updates on current and future county infrastructure work. While creating the page, our IT team utilized the DOT's own "Projects in Your Neighborhood" site, which not only lists out all projects, but provides a description and updates from bid to completion with a red/yellow/green key to inform residents if the job remains on-time and on-budget. The new site has received excellent reviews and made the county government more accessible to its residents, and I would like to thank the NYS DOT for

the inspiration.

I know firsthand the important function Budget Hearings serve for members of the Legislature, State Agencies, and the public at large. I'd like to thank you for this opportunity to share my thoughts as you carry out your duty to enact a budget that is both fiscally responsible and effectively serves the needs of the people.

Respectfully submitted,

Kevin M. Byrne
Putnam County Executive