



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Shelley B. Mayer

River Journal: Sens. Harckham and Mayer, Rebuild NY Now and Labor Officials Call for Increased Funding for Highway Improvements

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Roadway Funding Press Conference 3-26-23. Photo: office of State Sen. Pete Harckham / Tom Staudter

On March 26, New York State Senators **Pete Harckham** and **Shelley B. Mayer**, Peekskill Mayor **Vivian McKenzie** and officials from Rebuild NY Now and area labor unions called for an additional \$2 billion in the NYS Department of Transportation's Capital Improvement Fund at a special news conference held here at United Association (UA) Plumbers & Steamfitters Local 21.

The event was hosted by **Thomas Carey**, president of the Westchester Putnam Central Labor Body and business agent for UA Local 21, along with John T. Cooney, Jr., executive director of the Construction Industry Council of Westchester and Hudson Valley, a Rebuild NY partner, and other infrastructure advocates.

The Rebuild NY Now coalition recently sent a letter to Governor **Kathy Hochul** and Assembly Speaker **Carl Heastie** asking for them to include the extra \$2 billion of funding for roads in the FY2024 State Budget, which the State Senate has already approved. That would bring the total funding for DOT capital improvements up to \$8 billion for the next four years.

“Residents are letting me know daily how frustrating and dangerous it is to drive on our roadways,” said Harckham. “I have been in regular contact with NYSDOT about certain roads needing immediate repair, but enough is enough! We know the costs to maintain and fix roads have increased, and that’s why it is necessary to add \$2 billion to the NYSDOT’s five-year capital improvement plan.”

“I am pleased the Senate One House Budget resolution includes additional funding for the Department of Transportation’s Capital Program,” said Mayer. “Everyday I hear from drivers and passengers expressing frustration about the condition of our roads and bridges. We must fight for its inclusion in the final budget. Roadways that are in poor condition pose a danger to drivers, and are costly to individuals for vehicle repairs. Our communities and local economy depend on solid investments in our infrastructure.

Mayer added, “This additional funding will allow us to make the repairs our roads and bridges need, and that our drivers and passengers need and deserve. We must do what we can to safeguard New Yorkers and ease daily troubles by investing in roadways.”

Roadways are often regarded as the most vital infrastructure component in the United States because an overwhelming majority of goods are transported by truck and most commuters use roads daily to get to work. While recent studies show roads are getting better, thanks to federal investments, in eastern states they are getting worse. According to United State Department of Transportation (USDOT) data released last month, New York has the 6th worst roads in the US. (Only Hawaii, Massachusetts, California, New Jersey and Rhode Island are worse.)

The USDOT study notes that in New York 24% of the roadways are in poor condition and 37% are in fair condition; only 39% of our roads are in good condition. Per capita New Yorkers travel over 14 miles a day on statewide roads.

Along with the State Senate's proposed \$2 billion addition to the DOT Capital Improvement Plan, the Senate is also supporting partners in local government so that they can maintain municipal transportation infrastructure with:

- An additional \$200 million in support for the Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS);
- \$70 million in additional support for the Extreme Winter Recovery program; and
- Increasing Aid and Incentives for Municipalities (AIM) funding by \$213 million (approximately 30 percent per municipality).

"This additional \$2 billion in highway improvement funding that our State Senators are supporting is much needed and will also create more jobs," said Carey. "If you drive down our roads, you will know that they are in need of attention and repair."

"New Yorkers want to be able to say that their roads are in good shape and are safe to travel on," said Mayor McKenzie. "We deserve to have great infrastructure, and what better way to

create more good jobs and increase economic development throughout our state than by maintaining our roadways?”

Cooney noted that NYSDOT’s Region 8, which covers Westchester and the Hudson Valley, has the worst road conditions in the state—and has for the past several years. Region 8 has 5,000 more lane miles to take care of than any other DOT region, and more bridge decks to maintain than New York City and Long Island combined.

“The extra funding for the DOT capital plan is sorely needed right here,” said Cooney. “The Senate’s One-House Budget recognizes this and knows the money needs to be spent to make our roads safer.”

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