



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## Highway Funding Must Be a Priority

PATRICK GALLIVAN April 4, 2024

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The arrival of Spring ushers in the highway construction season in Western New York and reminds us of the importance of the state's continued investment in roads, bridges, and other infrastructure projects. In the past week, two major reconstruction projects got underway in Senate District 60.

The first is a \$48-million transformation of a one-mile stretch of U.S. Route 20, known as Southwestern Boulevard and Transit Road, in the towns of West Seneca, Elma and Orchard Park. In addition to replacing the nearly 100-year-old bridge over Cazenovia Creek, the

project includes a new road surface, sidewalks, and other improvements. From Cazenovia Creek to Seneca Street, two travel lanes will be created in each direction with a center turning lane to match the highway configuration on the other side of the bridge and to negate the need for traffic to merge into one lane. The entire project should be completed by late 2026.

The second major project is the rehabilitation of Union Road in West Seneca and Cheektowaga, a busy commuter and commercial corridor that provides access to the Route 400. The \$11-million project will resurface about fifteen lane miles of pavement, replace curb ramps, and upgrade traffic signals at 19 intersections between Woodward Drive and Walden Avenue. Construction should be complete by winter 2025.

While these two projects are significant in scope, they are by no means the only ones planned in our region. Each year the Department of Transportation and local highway departments invest in maintaining safe roads and bridges, which is not only important to motorists and pedestrians, but vital to our economy. That is why I again call on my colleagues in the NYS Legislature to increase funding for transportation and infrastructure projects in the 2024-25 state budget.

Under the governor's proposed spending plan, transportation funding would be cut drastically, including a \$60 million reduction in the Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS), the state's primary source of funding for local roads, bridges, and culverts.

As the Senate and Assembly work to finalize a new budget, we must not only restore CHIPS funding, but increase it. At the same time, the legislature should ensure funding for other transportation programs, such as PAVE-NY, Extreme Winter Recovery, BRIDGE-NY, and Pave our Potholes, be maintained at current levels. Failure to adequately fund these

programs will have a negative impact on public safety, our economy, and the quality of life of our residents.

New York must do better when it comes to our infrastructure. The Annual Highway Report from the Reason Foundation ranked New York's highway system 49th in the nation.

According to the latest analysis from TRIP, a national transportation advocacy group, roads and bridges that are deficient, congested, or lack desirable safety features, cost NY motorists an additional \$36.7 billion annually due to higher vehicle operating costs, traffic accidents, and congestion related delays.

The state has an obligation to ensure adequate and equitable funding is available to build and maintain a safe and effective highway system.