



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jeremy Cooney

Senator Cooney Reveals Priorities as New Chairman of Senate Transportation Committee

JEREMY COONEY May 10, 2024

| ISSUE: **TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE, IMPROVING TRANSPORTATION, CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE, PUBLIC TRANSIT**



Appointment Comes On The Heels of Senator Helping To Invest \$15.3 Billion Into Transportation In This Year's Budget

Sen. Cooney: It's Time To Think Bigger About What Transportation Can Look Like In New York (ROCHESTER, NY) - In his first appearance as Chairman of the Senate Transportation Committee, **Senator Jeremy Cooney (D-Rochester)** today outlined his vision for the future of

transportation both in Rochester and Monroe County, and also across New York State. Senator Cooney was named Chairman of the Transportation Committee this week by Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins (D-Yonkers) after serving as a member of the committee since taking office in 2021. Senator Cooney is succeeding Tim Kennedy, who was recently elected to Congress. The Senator will be the first member of the AAPI community to serve as Transportation Chair in the history of New York State.

“Transportation is intertwined in the fabric of every New Yorker’s daily life, bridging the gap between Point A and Point B,” said **Senator Cooney**. “As I begin my chairmanship of the Transportation Committee, I’m focused on every area transportation touches: from equity and economic development, to street safety and connecting our communities. I’m grateful for this leadership opportunity and fully believe that New York must be in the driver’s seat when it comes to innovative mobility solutions and modernizing transit infrastructure.

Below are several priority areas Senator Cooney announced he will focus on as chairman.

Connecting lower-income communities to economic opportunities:

With barriers to transportation often serving as key obstacles for lower-income individuals seeking jobs, Senator Cooney outlined two key ways to use transportation to support equity in New York’s communities. First, he highlighted the importance of **continuing to support public transit systems** like Rochester’s Regional Transit Service (RTS), which passengers rely on every day. Senator Cooney said he would continue to fight for funding for these services, funds which would allow transit services to provide more frequent, reliable routes to their passengers. In this year’s budget, Senator Cooney helped secure an additional \$10 million specifically set aside for Upstate New York transit systems through State Operating Assistance (STOA) funding, bringing the total to \$333.2 million in FY25.

Beyond travel within each region, Senator Cooney also discussed the importance of better connecting our Upstate communities. As businesses like Micron begin hiring outside Syracuse and companies move into the STAMP site in Genesee County, the potential **benefits of high-speed rail** continue to grow in New York. The NYS Department of Transportation has released their preferred option for high-speed rail, called “90B,” but the Senator prefers a more ambitious plan. He is calling for “higher-speed rail” which would reach speeds of up to 125mph, and is pushing for a more aggressive construction timeline. With new companies continuing to choose Upstate New York, high-speed rail has the potential to connect workers to opportunities across the state, including those from low-income communities.

Righting Wrongs of the Past and Reconnecting Communities:

As Chairman of the Transportation Committee, Senator Cooney will oversee the implementation of several large infrastructure projects across the state. Among these projects are efforts across Upstate cities to demolish and redevelop highways that have divided communities, including the **Inner Loop North** redevelopment project in the City of Rochester, I-81 in Syracuse, and the Kensington Expressway Project in Buffalo. In each of these cases, some communities were destroyed and others lost out on investment opportunities as they were cut off from the rest of their cities. These development projects will reconnect these communities and provide new economic opportunities for the impacted populations.

Promoting a cleaner environment and safer streets:

Senator Cooney affirmed his commitment to promoting modes of transportation that cut emissions and support New York’s environmental goals, including the continued expansion of electric buses similar to those RTS currently uses. The Senator also noted the importance of not only making sure our roads work for cars and trucks, but also for cyclists and pedestrians by prioritizing bike lanes and safer roads designed around pedestrian safety.

Aviation:

The new Chairman explained that ensuring all modes of transportation work for New Yorkers means focusing on everything from cyclists to our airports. The Senator is committed to exploring options for **new direct flights** from airports across Upstate New York and noted that he will begin talks with airport directors across the state to see how he can help meet the needs of airline passengers.

Investments in the FY25 State Budget:

Senator Cooney also outlined his commitment to ensuring substantial investments for infrastructure and public transportation in future budgets. The Senator's appointment as Chairman comes after the Senator helped secure over \$15.3 billion for the NYS Department of Transportation in the FY25 state budget, including \$5.3 billion in aid to localities, \$9.5 billion for capital projects, and \$500 million for state operations.

This budget includes a \$60 million increase in additional funding for the Consolidated Local Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS) for a total of \$598 million. The CHIPS program is the primary source of funding for local governments to make pivotal pothole, road and bridge repairs.

Senator Cooney also successfully advocated for the inclusion of **\$18 million for the construction of a long-distance bus station** at Louise M. Slaughter Station, fulfilling the late Congresswoman's vision of creating a truly intermodal terminal for Rochesterians and visitors to our area.

"Leading the transportation committee means not just looking at the needs of our state at this moment, but also looking at what our state will need in five, ten, or fifteen years. From embracing cleaner technologies, expanding options at our airports, and connecting our state

through high-speed rail, the possibilities for the road ahead are endless,” **Senator Cooney** continued.

Reactions to Senator Cooney’s appointment can be found below:

“On behalf of the entire RTS team and our customers, I congratulate Senator Cooney on being named the Chairman of the New York State Senate’s Transportation Committee,” said **RTS CEO Miguel Velázquez**. “Chairman Cooney is a fierce advocate for public transportation and a long-time friend and supporter of RTS. We have done a lot of work together to provide safe, reliable, convenient, and sustainable transportation for the people of the Rochester region and we are excited to continue that work with the Senator in this new role.”

Grant Malone, President of the Rochester Building & Construction Trades Council said, “I’m very pleased with today’s announcement and I’m looking forward to working with Senator Cooney to bring a fair share of infrastructure funding back to Western NY.”

Joseph Morelle Jr, Executive Director, UNiCON Rochester said, “Senator Cooney has always been a champion of transportation projects in the Rochester area including just recently securing \$18 million to expand the Louise Slaughter train station to now include the bus terminal and making Rochester’s intermodal station complete. Now as Chair of the Senate Committee on Transportation, the Rochester community knows that our transportation needs such as improving roads and bridges like the Mt Read Blvd redevelopment, developing a multi-modal transportation HUB, and expanding our regional transit services facilities to meet the needs of today’s riders, will be at the center of Senator Cooney’s efforts. UNiCON and our partners in labor and business are very excited about the opportunities that Senator Cooney will deliver based on record he has already set in delivering for Rochester.”

New York State Department of Transportation Commissioner Marie Therese Dominguez said, “New York State is a national leader on project delivery and innovation in our infrastructure, backed by record investments by Governor Hochul and the New York state legislature. Senator Cooney is a passionate transportation proponent both in his hometown of Rochester and the entire Empire State, and as he assumes the Chairmanship of the Senate Transportation Committee, we are eager to continue our strong partnership with him, collaborating on transportation solutions that benefit all New Yorkers.”

John Trott, President ATU 282 said, “ATU 282, its Executive Board, and its members are excited to see Senator Cooney in his new role as Chair of the New York State Senate’s transportation committee. Senator Cooney has been an advocate for all aspects of transportation to support our Union members, RTS customers, and the community. We will continue to support and help Senator Cooney to build a better Rochester. Congratulations to Senator Cooney, and we look forward to growing our partnership with you.

“In Western New York, and around our state, public transportation plays a critical role in providing inclusive options for traveling throughout the region,” said **James Morrell, NYPTA Director of Public Transit, and President of NYPTA**. “It connects people to jobs, school, recreational destinations, and essential services. As someone who has worked in public transportation for several decades, I want to congratulate the new Senate Transportation Committee Chairman Jeremy Cooney on his role and am looking forward to working with him to continue to improve this vital community asset.”

Christopher Tuff, Deputy CEO of Central New York Regional Transportation Authority (Centro) said, “We are thrilled to have Senator Jeremy Cooney as the new Senate Transportation Committee Chairman. The Senator has been a supporter of public transportation for many years and believe he has the experience and vision to ensure New York’s transit system receive the support they need to move our communities forward.”

"Congratulations to Senator Jeremy Cooney on his appointment as the Chair of the Senate Transportation Committee. We applaud the Senator's advocacy for better transportation across the state. His dedication ensures a brighter future for all New Yorkers as we work to provide more connections throughout the state. Senator Cooney will be a tremendous partner for mobility companies like CDTA and we look forward to working with him," said **Carm Basile, CEO of CDTA**

Wayne Spence, President NYS Public Employee Federation said, "The NYS Public Employees Federation is very pleased with the appointment of Senator Jeremy Cooney to replace Senator Tim Kennedy as Chairperson of the Senate Transportation Committee. Sen. Cooney understands the need to invest in the state's infrastructure and will work with stakeholders and communities across the state to deliver needed resources to address repairs and improvements to the state's roads, bridges, and other critical infrastructure. We look forward to continuing our work with Sen. Cooney and the entire NYS Senate Majority to maximize the use of state employees for state-funded transportation projects and to ensure that all state projects have appropriate oversight and transparency so that taxpayer dollars continue to be used effectively and efficiently."

Tim Barbetto, President of Teamsters Local 118 said, "As President of Teamsters Local 118, representing Freight, Construction, Express, Package, and Passenger Transportation, I couldn't be more pleased with the announcement of Senator Cooney as Transportation Chair. It is the goal of our Union to support pro-labor leaders who work diligently in support of pro-worker legislation. At no other time in our history has it been more critical to have leadership in place that protects and advances the interests of workers. I look forward to continuing this vital work together. Congratulations Senator!"

Brad McAreavy, President, Rochester Automobile Dealers Association (RADA) said, "The franchised dealers of the Rochester Automobile Dealers Association congratulate Senator

Cooney for his appointment as State Senate Transportation Chair. In previous discussions, he has proven to be a reasoned, thoughtful representative when it comes to policy issues related to the auto industry. The needs of New York's transportation sector are complicated and varied. Senator Cooney is an ideal person to take on such an important responsibility."

Chris Austin, WNY Business Manager, North Atlantic States Regional Council of Carpenters said, "Senator Cooney has set the bar high from the first day he walked into public office, the North Atlantic States Regional Council of Carpenter's is excited to roll up our sleeves and assist Senator Cooney with rebuilding the infrastructure of NY State. The Middle class of New York State will benefit by this appointment."

"AIA Rochester celebrates Senator Cooney's appointment as Chair of the Transportation Committee. Senator Cooney has been an ally to our architecture profession, promoting pro-growth legislature benefiting our firms and architects via his focus on infrastructure and building growth. We look forward to continuing a collaborative relationship with Senator Cooney."

Thomas A. Callahan, President of the NYS Conference of Operating Engineers said, "The New York Conference of Operating Engineers congratulates Senator Jeremy Cooney on his selection as Chair of the Transportation Committee! He brings a deep understanding of the needs of working people and a serious commitment to repairing our aging infrastructure to the job. He will be an excellent chair!"

"As the Director of Aviation for the Frederick Douglass-Greater Rochester International Airport, I commend the appointment of Senator Jeremy Cooney as the Senate Transportation Committee Chair. Senator Cooney understands how important airports are to economic development while also providing a gateway to anywhere in the world," said **Monroe County Airport Director Andrew Moore**. "Senator Cooney and Monroe County

Executive Adam Bello are a formidable team supporting our airport's modernization efforts and the New York's aviation industry as a whole.”

“Reconnect Rochester warmly congratulates State Senator Jeremy Cooney on his appointment to be Chairman of the Senate Transportation Committee. Senator Cooney has been a staunch ally and champion for meeting the transportation needs of people living in Monroe County, evidenced by his latest feat of bringing home \$18M to build a proper intercity bus terminal. We know he will continue to fight for transportation equity from this powerful leadership seat, and support bringing legislation to the Senate floor that will result in safer streets and better public transit for all New Yorkers,” said **Mary Staropoli, Executive Director, Reconnect Rochester.**

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