



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michelle Hinchey

Hinchey, Barrett Secure \$200,000 to Create New Columbia County Bus Service, Linking Hudson and Chatham

THE OFFICE OF NYS SENATOR MICHELLE HINCHEY May 17, 2024



HUDSON, NY — Today, New York State Senator Michelle Hinchey and Assemblymember Didi Barrett announced \$200,000 in funding they secured through the FY'25 State Budget for Columbia County to explore the creation of a new public transportation option connecting the City of Hudson to the Town and Village of Chatham, addressing the need for increased access to public transportation serving rural towns and small cities.

“Public transportation is a public good that should always be affordable, reliable, and

accessible to everyone, no matter where they live. Yet, in upstate and rural communities, including here in the Hudson Valley, decades of underfunding has left us with limited local transit options. Today, we're working to change that," **said Senator Michelle Hinchey.** "I'm proud to have secured state funding with Assemblymember Barrett to bring a new shuttle service to Columbia County for communities across Hudson and Chatham. Public transportation is a lifeline in rural areas, and I look forward to seeing the impact this shuttle will have on improving the quality of life for Columbia residents through new connections to local services, commerce, and jobs."

"The lack of public transportation in rural districts like mine, which reaches from the Town of New Lebanon in the north to the Town of Poughkeepsie in the south, poses serious barriers for our residents to access jobs, education, healthcare, and other critical services," **said Assemblymember Didi Barrett.** "Expanding public transportation from Hudson to Chatham is the first step towards creating a county-wide public transportation network while at the same time promoting transportation alternatives that reduce our carbon footprint. I am proud to have successfully fought for this funding in the recently enacted state budget alongside Senator Hinchey, and I thank Hudson Third Ward Supervisor Michael Chameides and Chatham Town Supervisor Donal Collins for their leadership and support."

Chatham Town Supervisor Donal Collins said, "The Town of Chatham would like to express its heartfelt gratitude to Senator Hinchey and Assemblywoman Barrett for spearheading the expansion of transportation opportunities within Columbia County, which will help provide our residents with greater connectivity to a plethora of services and social venues for a multitude of communities. This is a timely boost to Columbia County's transportation capabilities and will provide a terrific groundwork for future expansions to reach even further into the County's rural lands."

Chatham Village Mayor John Howe said, “On behalf of the Village of Chatham, I would like to extend our thanks to both Senator Hinchey and Assemblymember Barret for securing \$200,000 on this important project and also the Columbia County Board of Supervisors for recognizing the need for this important transportation link.”

Michael Chameides, Public Transportation Chair, Columbia County Board of Supervisors, said, “Public transit gives us an affordable way for everyone to get to work, medical appointments, and all the places we need to go. I’m grateful to Senator Hinchey and Assemblymember Barrett for securing funding to improve Columbia County transportation. I look forward to working with partners to implement this program and ensure residents have better opportunities.”

Claire Parde, Executive Director of The Healthcare Consortium, said, “Rural places are wonderful in so many ways, but they are not usually rich in transportation services, and that can make it challenging for the people that live there to get to school, work, healthcare and other services, shopping areas, cultural activities, and social events. We applaud this effort to further connect parts of our community and, in so doing, connect people to each other and all the things that support healthy, prosperous, and fulfilling lives.”

Robert Gibson, Commissioner of the Columbia County Department of Social Services, said, “As a Columbia County resident and a member of the county’s Transportation Committee, I am very grateful for the hard work that has gone into securing resources that will help the county address what has been a vexing problem for many of its residents: transportation to and from essential services. One of the gaps identified by the committee was the lack of transportation from the northern, southern, and eastern parts of the county to the greater Hudson area, where many of these services are located. Opening up this corridor to our residents is a major step toward solving this problem. I would like to thank Senator Hinchey

and Assemblymember Barrett for helping to arrange for the necessary funding to accomplish this. I also want to thank the Board of Supervisors and every member of the committee for remaining committed to addressing this critical issue.”

An estimated 1,570 households in Columbia County lack access to a car, with the highest concentration in the City of Hudson. Existing public transportation in the county is heavily utilized, catering to over 30,000 riders in 2022. Columbia County recently renewed extended hours for its popular Shopping Shuttle, which offers \$1 rides in Hudson and Greenport, following a successful one-year pilot where ridership increased by 25% in 2023.

In rural communities, public transportation can serve as a foundation for economic growth, healthcare well-being, social inclusivity, environmental sustainability, and motivating young people to remain and contribute to the community they grew up in through convenient job connections. The new shuttle service championed by Senator Hinchey and Assemblymember Barrett will provide a vital link to essential services, delivering on the need for more rural public transportation options in Columbia County.

Hinchey and Barrett were joined in Hudson on Friday by Hudson Mayor Kamal Johnson, Chatham Town Supervisor Donal Collins, Chatham Village Mayor John Howe, Hudson 2nd Ward Supervisor Abdus Miah, and President & CEO of the Columbia County Chamber Bill Gerlach. Also present were members of the Transportation Planning Committee within the Columbia County Board of Supervisors, including Majority Leader and Stuyvesant Supervisor Ron Knott, Hudson Ward 3 Supervisor and Transportation Chair Michael Chameides, Hudson Ward 5 Supervisor Rick Scalera, Commissioner of the Columbia County Department of Social Services Robert Gibson, and Claire Parde, Director of the Columbia County Community Healthcare Consortium.

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