



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

Center Street Bridge Re-Opens

CATHARINE YOUNG January 18, 2009

SALAMANCA – The Center Street Bridge was officially re-opened to alternating one-lane traffic today, easing a major headache that hurt local businesses, residents and emergency services.

The ceremony was led by State Senator Catharine Young (R,I,C – Olean), who spearheaded a task force focused on reopening the bridge. She secured \$200,000 in state Capital funds to match more than \$800,000 in federal aid and nearly \$30,000 from the City.

State and local officials, Seneca Nation President Maurice John, and dozens of community representatives celebrated the repairs that will keep the bridge opened until it can be permanently replaced. Originally the bridge was slated to be reconstructed starting in 2011. Senator Young and DOT officials successfully pushed to move up the schedule so that the project will be let in September 2009, and construction will begin in Spring 2010.

The Center Street Bridge was closed in January by the State Department of Transportation (DOT) after they conducted structural surveys of all bridges across New York. Center Street Bridge was the second bridge to close in Salamanca. The West State Street Bridge has been closed since December 2005 due to earlier inspections that found severe structural deterioration.

“Today is a great day for the residents of Salamanca who suffered through a major inconvenience and headache,” said Senator Young. “The bridge being out of commission caused a severe hardship for the entire region. Emergency services, school bus transportation and every day travel for residents were disrupted. The detour added several miles to anyone who needed to get across town. With skyrocketing gas prices, it was difficult for people to afford, and it putting a heavy strain on family budgets.”

“That’s why everyone was working so hard to make the repairs as quickly as possible and I was glad to help,” she said. “All parties involved were extraordinarily cooperative and helpful. The Seneca Nation expedited an agreement with the State so work could begin, DOT did a fantastic job and the City worked hard to get things moving,” she said. “Communication was key to the opening of the span ahead of schedule.”

Department of Transportation Executive Deputy Commissioner Stan Gee said, “With the support of Governor David A. Paterson, the State Department of Transportation is proud to have partnered successfully with the city of Salamanca, the Seneca Nation of Indians, Senator Catherine Young and our bridge contractor to make the early opening of this critical transportation link in the community possible. We are also continuing design work on the replacement bridge and expect to let a contract for constructing the new bridge in the fall of next year.”

Department of Transportation Regional Director Alan Taylor said, "I join in saluting the cooperative spirit of all who have made today's celebration possible especially the hard work and dedication of the department's design and construction staff, the contractor, L.C. Whitford Co., Inc. and the Seneca Nation of Indians."

“I am pleased to have been able to help with the process of re-opening the Center Street Bridge. The City of Salamanca, the State DOT, the Seneca Nation and Senator Young and I all worked diligently to help fast-track the re-opening and the future replacement of the bridge.

This collaboration among various interests was key to our success," said Assemblyman Joseph M. Giglio.

Mayor of Salamanca, Jeffrey Pond said, “I am pleased that seven months of inconvenience to the residents of Salamanca has come to an end. Even though it is one lane of traffic, the City will be reconnected.

“I’m also quite relieved that the project was completed before the start of the school year,” Senator Young continued. The Salamanca School District contacted me in regards to the problems they were having with their school bus fuel bills, so I secured an additional \$35,000 in state aid to save local taxpayers from shouldering the added costs,” she said.

“While the reopened bridge will be alternating, one-way traffic under 15 tons, it will accommodate school buses and some emergency vehicles. There will still be some inconvenience, but it will be minor compared to the situation now.”