



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Darrel J. Aubertine

## Nysdot Breaks Ground on Border Improvement Project

DARREL J. AUBERTINE August 19, 2009

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### Stimulus-Funded Initiative Will Enhance Traffic Mobility, Increase Security

New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) Acting Commissioner Stanley Gee was in the Thousand Islands today to mark the beginning of a \$1.3 million highway project to improve traffic mobility and security at the Customs and Border Protection Station on Interstate 81 on Wellesley Island, Jefferson County. The project is funded through the

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA).

“This project will have a major impact on efficiency and security at the border crossing by allowing motorists to pass through more easily while providing Customs and Border Protection personnel the ability to sort commercial truck traffic prior to their entering the Customs plaza,” Acting Commissioner Gee said. “I thank Governor Paterson for his dedication to quickly certifying shovel-ready projects such as this for economic-recovery funding.”

Acting Commissioner Gee was joined this morning for a news conference at the border crossing by Senator Darrel J. Aubertine, Thousand Islands Bridge Authority Executive Director Robert G. Horr III, Customs and Border Protection Area Port Director Alan F. Whitcomb and Associated General Contractors (AGC) Regional Director Rhonda M. McNeely.

Of the \$1.1 billion New York State received for highway and bridge projects under ARRA, a total investment of \$34 million in economic-recovery funding is expected to be certified for North Country communities.

“Cross border trade and tourism are vital components of our North Country economy and these new lanes and enhanced road shoulders will help balance the need for security and the need for swift, easy travel across our border,” said Senator Darrel J. Aubertine. “This project emerged as an ideal candidate to support for stimulus funding because its economic impact will extend well beyond the private sector jobs sustained by its construction. A more secure and more efficient border crossing will improve our vital trade relationship with our neighbors to the north and benefit tourism throughout the region.”

Assemblywoman Russell said, "This project provides much needed enhancements to the border crossing at the Thousands Islands International Bridge. It is vital to both our

commerce and tourism - two key aspects of the economic engine which the North Country relies upon. In addition, it will help traffic flows during the construction of the new Land of Port Entry, which is also aimed at easing border crossings."

Robert G. Horr, Executive Director of the Thousand Islands Bridge Authority continued, "This project is important to the region as it makes the Thousands Islands crossing, in many ways, more user-friendly." He went on to say, "The project improves border clearing efficiencies for visitors and allows for the more efficient movement of goods through the area. These are the things that help to define a port as being user-friendly."

Area Port Director Alan F. Whitcomb said of the project, "The challenges of border security are many and varied, with border crossing efficiency being not the least of our concerns." He went on to say, "By allowing commercial traffic to be separated from general automobile traffic, our operational efficiency increases thereby improving the crossing experience for all who use this port."

AGC Regional Director Rhonda McNeely said, "This is a good example of how ARRA funded projects make a difference to the traveling public." She went to say, "This funding helps to ensure that our construction industry stays active and engaged and that our infrastructure is maintained, or in this case, improved to meet modern needs."

The project includes the construction of two additional lanes just south of the US/Canadian Rift Bridge. These lanes will allow passenger and truck traffic coming into the United States to sort prior to entering the Customs and Border Protection Station.

This sorting will make the movement of automobile traffic more efficient by allowing commercial trucks to be routed to a specific inspection area. Shoulders will be widened and overhead sign structures will be upgraded as part of the project.

Construction, being performed by Luck Brothers, Inc of Plattsburgh, Clinton County, is expected to be completed by the end of this year.

The economic-recovery funds coming to New York State for transportation projects must follow the same process required for distributing all federal transportation funds.

The funds are allocated to projects that are selected by the 13 regional Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) across the state, which are comprised of local elected officials, local transit operators and NYSDOT representatives. MPOs vote unanimously on projects for their Transportation Improvement Program, and the projects are candidates for economic-recovery funds.

Similarly, regions of New York State without MPOs are served by NYSDOT, which consults with local elected officials and selects projects for the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program. The department worked with local officials and the Governor's Economic Recovery Cabinet to identify this shovel-ready project as eligible for recovery funds.

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*press release from New York State Department of Transportation*