



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Betty Little

Governor Cuomo and Governor Shumlin Announce Opening of Lake Champlain Bridge

BETTY LITTLE November 9, 2011

| ISSUE: **TRANSPORTATION**



New Bridge Reopens Vital Link Between New York and Vermont;

Construction Completed Six Years Ahead of Initial Projection

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and Vermont Governor Peter Shumlin today announced the opening of a new bridge that spans Lake Champlain, connecting New York and Vermont and providing a vital link for the residents, local businesses, and communities of both states. As a result of the unprecedented collaboration between the partners involved in building the new bridge and the leadership of the two governors, construction was completed in just two years rather

than the initial eight year projection. Lieutenant Governor Robert Duffy joined Governor Shumlin and local officials in Crown Point, New York for a ribbon cutting ceremony to celebrate the bridge's opening.

"The opening of a new bridge over Lake Champlain is great news for residents and businesses in the North Country who depend upon this bridge and have been inconvenienced by its closure," Governor Cuomo said. "When the bridge was closed and demolished in 2009, it was estimated to take eight years to rebuild. I am pleased to announce that thanks to the hard work and dedication of our federal, state, and local partners, the bridge is opening far earlier than planned. Today's announcement demonstrates that once again New York state government can work effectively and efficiently for the people. I thank the Department of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration, and our partners in Vermont for their assistance in building this bridge, which will help revitalize local economies and strengthen the relationship between our two states."

"It's a critical link for west-central Vermont and New York State, and vital to Vermont's economic strength, as well as for the people who rely upon that bridge for work and recreation. The structure that is opening today recreates the iconic previous Champlain Bridge, and I'm enormously proud of the design and the execution of this state-of-the-art engineering accomplishment," said Vermont Governor Peter Shumlin.

Construction on the \$76 million new structure began in June 2010 after the old structure was demolished in December 2009. Due to the emergency nature of the closure and the lack of efficient detour routes, New York and Vermont worked closely with the United States Department of Transportation and other federal and state agencies to efficiently lead a replacement project through significant review processes and necessary oversights required to guarantee that a safe new structure could be delivered to the community in record time. Overall, a project that was initially expected to be completed only by 2017 was finished in late 2011.

Lieutenant Governor Robert Duffy said, "I am proud to stand here today on this historic occasion at a signature bridge that was completed for the people of these communities with little time to spare. This bridge symbolizes what a responsive government can do for the people. This is about getting things done and working for the people of New York State. With the leadership of Governor Cuomo, together with our partners in Vermont and Washington, we were able to restore mobility for the people and business of New York and Vermont, providing a safer, stronger, better link across Lake Champlain that will help restore normalcy to everyone who depends on this bridge."

The ribbon cutting ceremony was also attended by a group known as the "29ers," who attended the ribbon cutting ceremony for the former bridge in 1929.

U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood said, "The completion of the new Lake Champlain Bridge is a huge milestone for the people of New York and Vermont. This project is a great example of the transportation investments we need to make right away to strengthen our economy, ease congestion, and create good jobs."

New York State Department of Transportation Commissioner Joan McDonald said, "The opening of the new Lake Champlain Bridge is an historic event that opens the way for commuters, tourists and businesses freely travel between New York and Vermont over Lake Champlain. The collaborative efforts of New York, Vermont and all of our partners are a testament to what we can do when we put our heads together and work to achieve a common goal."

Brian Searles, Secretary of the Vermont Agency of Transportation, said, "Rebuilding the Lake Champlain Bridge quickly was critical because all those who live in the area, whether they are from Vermont or from New York, share many of the same family, friends and work relationships. Everyday life for thousands of people was significantly altered more than two years ago because their ability to cross the lake in a timely fashion is critical to their way of life. While the ferry helped a lot, only now with a new bridge can their lives truly get back to normal."

Congressman Bill Owens said, "The new Champlain Bridge will provide the residents of both Vermont and New York with secure passage over the lake and a much needed, long term improvement to this significant piece of infrastructure. The expediency and efficiency with which this project was completed is truly a testament to Governor Cuomo and Governor Shumlin's leadership. Thanks to them and our partners in Washington, New York's North Country and Vermont's west-central region will now be able to return on business as usual. This was an essential project that effected the lives of hundreds of thousands people. This was an essential project that affected the lives of thousands of my constituents and I am honored to be here today to reopen the new Champlain Bridge."

Senator Betty Little said, "Today's reopening of the Champlain Bridge is further proof of the efficiency and professionalism we have come to expect from Governor Cuomo and his administration. This bridge was, and now will continue to be, a critical artery between Vermont and New York, serving businesses and residents alike. The fact that this bridge was completed six years early proves that by working together we are once again able to carry out the people's business. I would like to thank Governor Cuomo, Lieutenant Governor Duffy, and Governor Shumlin for inviting me here today to be part of this special occasion."

Assemblywoman Teresa Sayward said, "With today's ribbon cutting, we are re-establishing the vital passage between New York and Vermont—and we are doing it ahead of schedule. In 2009, the goal was to rebuild a bridge that was stronger, safer and provided the people of these two states with the infrastructure they needed to carry on with their everyday lives. By working with our counterparts in Washington and Vermont, we were able to produce just that. This

bridge will jumpstart local economies and help residents enjoy what both New York and Vermont have to offer. I would like to thank all our partners, especially Governor Cuomo and Governor Shumlin, for their dedication to this project."

Chairman of the Essex County Board of Supervisors Randall T. Douglas said, "Residents, businesses, and communities in Essex County have for decades depended on the Lake Champlain Bridge and its closing in 2009 was a major inconvenience for all. Governor Cuomo, assisted by Vermont officials and the federal Government, has worked hard to make sure the rebuilding process moved as quickly as possible. On behalf of all of us in Essex County, a big thank you to all who helped with the construction of this new bridge."

Crown Point Town Supervisor Bethany Kosmider said, "Today's ribbon cutting is a big moment for all of us in Crown Point who have now been two years without this bridge. While the ferry service has helped with crossing Lake Champlain, the quick rebuilding of this bridge will be a major boost to our local economy and businesses here in our town. I thank Governor Cuomo for his leadership and the State Department of Transportation for their work to expedite the process."

Nancy Ockrin, Co-President of the Crown Point Chamber, said, "When The Lake Champlain bridge closed in 2009 community members and businesses significantly felt the loss. The vital link between our two states was severed in a moment, but the repercussions on people's lives and the economics for businesses on both sides of the lake were harsh and ongoing. We are more than ready for today! Vermont-here we come! And we anticipate once again steady traffic to our businesses this side of the lake. A heartfelt thanks to all who helped our new bridge become a reality- Governor Coumo, Governor Shumlin, The Lake Champlain Bridge Coalition, NYSDOT, The Lake Champlain Ferry Folks and all the contractors and laborers who worked through unimaginable weather conditions for us. Thank you. Thank you for today and come celebrate again with us in May."

Joe Bodette, Co-President of Crown Point Chamber, said, "Our thanks go out to all who were instrumental in restoring this vital link to our corridor. The Lake Champlain Bridge Coalition, the citizens of Essex and Addison counties, The governing bodies of both New York and Vermont and last but certainly not least the constuction companies and crews that brought us to this day."

The new Network Tied Arch Bridge is a steel structure with an arch along the center span. The bridge's design makes it significantly safer than the previous structure and will ensure at least a 75-year service life. Key bridge components are designed to be easily replaceable to reduce maintenance costs. Travel lanes are 11 feet wide, with five-foot shoulders that will help accommodate larger trucks and farm vehicles, as well as provide ample room for bicyclists. Sidewalks are featured on both sides of the bridge.

The eight-story, 402-foot long, 1.8 million pound arch was constructed at Velez Marine in Port Henry, then floated down the lake and lifted into place on August 26. Building the arch on land was much faster, easier and cost-efficient than trying to safely build the arch high in the air above Lake Champlain.

New York and Vermont provided free, temporary ferry service in February for commuters, which has run continuously 24 hours-a-day, 7 days-a-week since. Operated by the Lake Champlain Transportation Company, the ferry drastically cut commuting time from the two-hour, nearly 100-mile detour and effectively reestablished commerce and emergency service along the corridor after the former bridge was closed. Ferry service will immediately be discontinued now that the bridge is open to traffic.

The new bridge was built at the same location as the previous structure to minimize historic and environmental impacts on the surrounding area. The land adjacent to the bridge on both sides of the lake is historically sensitive, with Native American, French and Indian War and Revolutionary War artifacts buried deep along the shores of Lake Champlain. The ruins of 18th century forts – the French Fort St. Frederic and British Crown Point sit on the New York side of the bridge.

The construction contractor on the project is Flatiron Construction Corp. of Firestone, Colorado. Flatiron brought a core team of approximately a dozen managers, but hired nearly 500 different laborers, many of them local residents from New York and Vermont. Local subcontractors and material suppliers were used as well.

###