



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

## Higgins, Kennedy Want NFTA's 58-Year Hold on Outer Harbor Land to End, Propose Plan to Spur Further Waterfront Development

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY May 11, 2012

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### *Leaders Lay Out Plan for Transfer of Waterfront Lands to Erie Canal Harbor Development Corp.*

Congressman Brian Higgins, N.Y. State Sen. Timothy M. Kennedy and other local leaders laid out a plan that would once and for all take the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA) out of the waterfront business.

In a letter to NFTA Commissioners Higgins wrote, "It is undeniable that this public land has remained in the wrong public hands for too long...The land is not poised to serve its highest and best use...Is clear that NFTA must relinquish its waterfront holdings finally and forever."

"This proposal will accomplish the dual goals of sparking further waterfront redevelopment while ensuring local transportation needs are met," said Senator Kennedy. "Western New York wants progress now. Coming together behind this common-sense solution will allow us to take the next step forward to provide Western New Yorkers with the waterfront they deserve and the transportation services they need. A redeveloped waterfront and comprehensive transit systems are critical to our regional economic future – this plan will help us achieve those aims."

Kennedy sent a letter to the NFTA expressing state support for the proposal and urging them to transfer their Outer Harbor lands to the ECHDC – the chief state agency tasked with waterfront development.

"The NFTA needs to get back to their core mission of public transportation, and I have been encouraged by the NFTA's recent actions in that regard," said Assemblyman Ryan. "The time has come for the NFTA to get out of the business of owning waterfront land and follow this plan to transfer ownership to ECHDC. Preserving public access to these important public assets must be the guiding principle going forward, and ECHDC is the best entity to develop this property going forward."

More than \$125 million in infrastructure investments along the Outer Harbor in recent years, including construction of the new Parkway, is drawing more people and activity to this portion of Buffalo's waterfront. However, nearly six decades of control of hundreds of acres of prime Outer Harbor land by a public authority that has transportation, not waterfront development, as its core mission has resulted in minimal investments historically and left

the fate of this property in limbo.

Since the formation of the Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation (ECHDC), Buffalo's inner harbor has seen incredible progress drawing more than 500,000 people to the Commercial Slip. Public investment is delivering the first private sector interest and activity on Buffalo's waterfront – over \$80 million in private investment to date.

Over the last several weeks leaders have been working to develop and gain support for a bold plan to change the course of Buffalo's waterfront and fight decades of inertia along the Outer Harbor.

Under the proposal:

- Over 384 acres of property currently under control of the NFTA will be transferred to the ECHDC for \$1 by October of 2012.
- Upon transfer, ECHDC will invest more than \$11 million in improvements into the site including: restaurant expansion; clean-up and greening of the land; creation of a sand beach at Gallagher Beach; breakwall rehab including bike and pedestrian path extension, decorative lighting and benches; as well as dredging of the waterway.
- Revenue from economic activity generated at the Small Boat Harbor and other portions of the property will be redirected for future Outer Harbor site enhancements.

“Agencies and leaders have the opportunity to come together to do what’s right for our city and our waterfront,” added Higgins. “Releasing the NFTA’s 58 year hold on Outer Harbor property allows the transit agency to refocus on its mission to move people and puts waterfront development in the hands of the accomplished waterfront agency. We are just beginning to see the promise our waterfront holds, this is the next logical step in the process.”