



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

## Kennedy & Panepinto Say WNY Roads Are Crumbling, More Funding Needed

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY February 18, 2015

| ISSUE: **TRANSPORTATION, BUDGET, TOWNS OR COUNTIES, VILLAGES**

*Senators: Extra \$200 Million for CHIPs Would Only Be a “Chip” Out of \$5 Billion Surplus*

*47% of Local Roads in NYS In Need of Rehabilitation*

BUFFALO, N.Y. – Senators Tim Kennedy (D-Buffalo) and Marc Panepinto (D-Buffalo) were joined by Senate colleagues throughout the state as they called today for a major increase in state funding for local road improvements in this year’s budget, citing the effects of the harsh 2014-15 winter and New York State’s \$5 billion one-time surplus. According to an October 2014 report from TRIP, a national transportation research group, only 53% of roads in New York State are rated as either “good” or “excellent,” far below TRIP’s suggested goal of 75%. Kennedy, Panepinto, and Senate Democrats are suggesting a \$200 million increase in Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program (CHIPs) funding, along with an extra \$100 million for New York State’s Extreme Weather Program, which focuses on helping municipalities improve roads damaged by harsh weather conditions, and \$200 million for Deficient Bridge Emergency Repair.

According to an analysis by the Senate Democratic Conference, the three proposals would create over 13,000 jobs statewide, both in temporary construction jobs, and also permanent

jobs created as a result of lowered transportation costs. Likewise, the Federal Highway Administrations estimates that consumers save \$5.20 for every dollar spent on road improvements, as a result of factors including reduced delays, lower vehicle maintenance costs, and improved safety. A separate study by TRIP cites nearly \$5 billion in vehicle maintenance costs for New Yorkers as a result of poorly-maintained roads. When maintenance is deferred, the opposite occurs, with the Cornell Local Roads Program estimated that every \$1 in deferred maintenance adding an additional \$4 or \$5 in future repair costs.

“Upstate, and specifically Western New York, are taking another beating this winter,” said Senator Kennedy, a member of the Senate Transportation Committee. “We cannot afford to defer maintenance on local roads and bridges once more. Study after study shows that well-maintained roads have a direct impact on the local economy. With Buffalo located 500 miles from 60% of Canada’s population and 40% of the United States’ population, totaling 147 million people, we have no shortage of reasons to make sure our roads are in top shape. As we continue budget negotiations, I urge my colleagues to join me in fighting for increased transportation funding.”

Senator Marc Panepinto said: "I am proud to echo Senator Kennedy’s call for increased investment and local bridge aid for our region. The call for an increase in funding is more important now than ever because, unique to us in Western New York, we have been hit by nearly 45 consecutive days of snow. Because of this, we will not know the full impact to our roads and infrastructure until it completely melts in the coming months.

“More funding is desperately needed given the environmental realities of this harsh winter season. I hope the Governor can give our request serious consideration as we head into budget season.”

Kennedy worked last year with his colleagues to secure \$40 million in extra local road funding, through the creation of the Extreme Weather Program, citing the poor state of local

roads after the freeze-thaw effects of the “polar vortex” throughout the winter. With New York State on a more stable financial footing, Kennedy is again calling for investment in local infrastructure as the lifeblood of the local economy. According to the study by TRIP, nearly six out of every seven miles of roads in New York State are maintained by counties and municipalities, along with more than half of the state’s estimated 9,000 bridges.

“We need to make sure that Upstate and Western New York is seeing its fair share of this \$5 billion surplus,” Kennedy added. “New York State is facing over \$34 billion in local road and bridge projects over the next 15 years, this proposed increase gets us back on the right path to making sure those projects happen on time and on budget.”

The joint letter sent by Kennedy, Panepinto, and other Senators from around the state is included below:

February 18, 2015

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo

Governor of New York State

NYS State Capitol Building

Albany, New York 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

We write to express our support for a significant increase in support for local road and bridge improvements throughout New York State. Specifically, we request a \$200 million

increase to the Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program, a \$200 million allocation for Deficient Bridge Emergency Repair, and \$100 million for New York's Extreme Weather Program. Such funding would allow municipalities and counties to improve their infrastructure, helping to prevent the type of damage that has been caused by harsh winter weather the past several years, while also increasing economic activity.

A study by TRIP, a national transportation research group, indicates that only 53% of roads in our state are rated as either "good" or "excellent," failing to attain TRIP's suggested goal of 75%. This increased funding, made possible with New York State's one-time surplus of \$5 billion from a number of financial settlements, would get our localities on a more stable financial footing as they look to repave and improve their battered roads and bridges, all while saving them money in the long-term. The Cornell Local Roads Program estimates that every \$1 in deferred maintenance ends up adding an additional \$4 or \$5 in future repair costs. This temporary increase in funding can end up saving our localities, and ultimately the state, hundreds of millions of dollars more in expenses.

In addition to municipal savings, this investment would both directly and indirectly create thousands of jobs throughout the state. The Senate Democratic Conference estimates that these three funding increases would ultimately create over 13,000 jobs both as a result of road and bridge construction and due to lower transportation costs for local employers. Likewise, we can expect improvements to also lower costs for consumers, with the Federal Highway Administration estimating that consumers save \$5.20 for every dollar spent on road improvements, resulting from factors such as reduced delays, lower vehicle maintenance costs, and improved safety. Indeed, a separate study by TRIP cited nearly \$5 billion in maintenance costs endured by New Yorkers every year as a result of poor road conditions.

Last year's \$40 million allocation in additional local road funding, via the Extreme Weather Program, was a boon for local governments that were struggling to keep up with the

damaging effects of the freeze-thaw cycle. With that extra funding, they were able to ensure that these cratered roads were milled and repaved. This winter has once again been trying, and municipalities are again struggling to keep pace with the damage to their roads. With six out of every seven miles of road in New York maintained by a municipality or county, this is a major expense faced by governments throughout the state. New York State should take advantage of its significant surplus, and drive these funds directly back into communities.

This funding, we believe, would benefit local governments, our constituents, and local businesses. We look forward to continuing to work with you to find solutions that work for all New Yorkers, and we thank you for your attention to and consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

Senator Timothy M. Kennedy, 63rd District

Senator Martin Malavé Dilan, 18th District

Senator Velmanette Montgomery, 25th District

Senator Gustavo Rivera, 33rd District

Senator Ruth Hassell-Thompson, 36th District

Senator Neil D. Breslin, 44th District

Senator Marc C. Panepinto, 60th District

Senator George Latimer, 37th District

Senator Jose Peralta, 13th District

Senator Kevin Parker, 21st District

Senator Bill Perkins, 30th District

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*Senator Timothy M. Kennedy represents the New York State Senate's 63rd District, which is comprised of the town of Cheektowaga, the city of Lackawanna and nearly all of the city of Buffalo. More information is available at <http://kennedy.nysenate.gov>.*