Reopened Rest Areas Enhance Safety for I-88 Travelers

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WORCESTER, 11/05/15 -- State Senator James L. Seward (R/C/I – Oneonta) today joined officials with the New York State Department of Transportation and the New York State Office of General Services to reopen the fully rehabilitated Worcester rest area on Interstate 88 eastbound between exits 18 and 19. The officials also announced the parking area at the Wells Bridge rest area on I-88 westbound in Unadilla has also reopened, with construction on a facility rehabilitation scheduled for next year.

"When the closures were first announced I voiced my concern, particularly for the safety of truck drivers who make their living and support their families traveling our highways," said Senator Seward. **"I remained steadfast, advocating for the reopening of both the Worcester and Wells Bridge locations, and made certain that funding was included in the state budget to accomplish that goal. Reopening these rest stops will improve highway safety for all travelers."**

New York State Department of Transportation Commissioner Matthew J. Driscoll said, "Interstates play a critical role in our transportation network and New York State's economy, facilitating both freight shipping and travel," Commissioner Driscoll said. "The funding secured by Senator Seward and approved by Governor Cuomo for these projects will help us provide additional locations for people to rest, stretch their legs and take a break from driving."

In 2010, the DOT closed six rest areas on interstate highways in what was announced as a cost saving measure. Senator Seward objected to the closings and joined local officials and transportation advocates to press for their reopening. To date, only the Worcester and Wells Bridge rest stops have reopened.

New York State Motor Truck Association President Kendra Hems said, "The trucking industry commends Senator Seward for his continued commitment to reopen rest areas in New York. The lack of safe and secure truck parking is an issue in New York and across the country. The reopening of closed rest areas are a priority for the New York State Motor Truck Association to ensure that truck drivers have safe places to park in order to obtain necessary and mandated rest breaks during their shifts. We look forward to working with Senator Seward as we continue to advocate for the reopening of the other rest areas that remain closed."

Worcester Fire Chief Jim Empie said, "The Worcester rest area, and others like it, are true safe havens for motorists that help prevent avoidable highway accidents. Senator Seward's

persistence is greatly appreciated and will mean the difference between life and death."

The 2014-2015 state budget included funding secured by Senator Seward to restore and reopen the Worcester rest area. The project included resurfacing the parking lot and walkways, installing new pavement markings and upgrading signs. That work was completed in November 2014 and the rest area was reopened as a parking area only.

This year, the building was modernized with the installation of new plumbing, electric, septic and heating/air conditioning systems, a new water supply and treatment system and new doors and windows. Bathrooms were remodeled to provide ADA-compliant stalls. A new emergency backup generator also was installed.

Senator Seward secured an additional $1.5 million in the 2015-2016 state budget to perform the same work at the Wells Bridge rest area. Work on the parking lot rehabilitation began in the summer of 2015. Opening the parking area now provides a safe place for motorists and long-distance truckers to pull off the road to take a break and rest, even before the facility can be opened to the public.

Improvements to the building are being designed and construction is expected to occur in 2016.

The New York State Office of General Services was responsible for the design and construction of both facilities.

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