



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

## Griffo seeks equal share of funding to fix Upstate roads, bridges

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO December 17, 2015

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UTICA – State Senator Joseph Griffo is calling upon the Governor to ensure that communities in Upstate New York receive an equal share of funding to address the urgent needs of their transportation infrastructure.

Following Gov. Andrew Cuomo’s recent \$8.3 billion agreement with Mayor Bill de Blasio to improve the MTA (Metropolitan Transportation Authority) in New York City, Sen. Griffo

says it is time that the crumbling roads and bridges of Upstate communities receive funding for repairs and maintenance on equal terms as those downstate.

Standing alongside a number of highway superintendents from across the region on Thursday, Sen. Griffo offered several proposals that he believes can help the State achieve funding parity between Upstate and Downstate infrastructure projects. Once the next Legislative Session begins in January, it is then Sen. Griffo's hope that the Governor will announce an Executive Budget that details how he plans to direct more of this funding upstate.

Because the Governor hasn't clearly defined how he plans to fund the \$8.3 billion MTA investment downstate, Sen. Griffo believes the State should use this opportunity to develop a funding stream that applies to all corners of the state.

**State Senator Joseph Griffo, R-Rome, said:** "It is no longer acceptable for the downstate region to receive millions of dollars in funding to enhance their transportation infrastructure, while the cities, towns and villages upstate are essentially left to fend for themselves in the face of crumbling roads and bridges. We are all one state, so we shouldn't be committed to helping one region and not the other."

Here is what Sen. Griffo is proposing help create this fair and equal funding parity:

- **Allocate a portion of existing surplus from whatever sources are available**, so it can be used by municipalities to rehabilitate their bridges and reconstruct their roads.
- **Convene a group of transportation and fiscal experts to consider the need for a Transportation Bond Act** to be approved by the State Legislature and public vote, which would allow for greater leverage in financing various critical infrastructure needs.

- **Ensure that the state’s Dedicated Bridge Fund of \$750 million annually is used strictly for the highway, bridge and road projects** that it was intended to address. Currently, about \$563 million (or roughly two-thirds) of this Fund is instead being redirected to help the Department of Motor Vehicles pay for operating expenses and the Department of Transportation pay for snow and ice removal. The Senate has already passed such a proposal this past session.

Sen. Griffo is also calling upon the Governor to give local municipalities and their highway officials more flexibility in deciding how state funding is spent on transportation infrastructure, since these governments control about 60 percent of the state’s roadways.

**Griffo added,** “Local highway superintendents are the ones who know what’s best for most of the roadways and bridges across their region, not the state Department of Transportation. They should be the ones explaining how much funding they need to improve their roadways, instead of the DOT telling them how they can spend their funding.”

**Michael Jamison, communications director for the Associated General Contractors of New York State, said:** “A coalition unprecedented in its breadth and diversity has come together around this issue. Our crumbling roads and bridges are in serious need of attention and, more importantly, are in serious need of a multibillion dollar capital commitment from the State. Renewing a commitment to the historic parity agreement between roads and bridges and transit will not only create jobs and save New Yorkers money – but it will ensure the safety and well-being of local families who every day ride on roads and bridges that are in a state of disrepair.”

**Pat Mahar, Town of Denmark Highway Superintendent and 4th Vice President of the New York State Association of Town Superintendents of Highways:** “I am pleased by Senator Griffo’s efforts

to secure an increase in funding for our local roads. This truly is not an Upstate-Downstate fight. I am responsible for 35 miles of roads in our town, but we pave just one mile of road a year, so every 35 years we reach the first road we paved, and by then it needs a complete rebuild that costs more than \$250,000. If Downstate gets an increase in funding, then Upstate should get a comparable increase in funding as well. We also need a five-year funding plan so municipalities from across the state know what funding they can rely on, which would allow us to plan ahead.”

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