



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Robert G. Ortt

NYPA Announces \$3.5 Million for Design and Engineering of Niagara Gorge Project

ROBERT G. ORTT December 20, 2016

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The New York Power Authority today announced \$3.5 million has been awarded to advance the final design for the Niagara Gorge Project. The project includes the removal of two miles of expressway segments of the Niagara Scenic Parkway, and replacing it with a scenic trail network and smaller road for local traffic to enhance access to the waterfront and adjoining neighborhoods in Niagara Falls.

“The Niagara Gorge is a natural wonder that, because of the former Robert Moses Parkway,

has effectively been walled off to the public for far too long,” **Governor Cuomo said.** “This action brings us one step closer toward finishing this project and increasing access to this scenic gem for Western New Yorkers and visitors alike.”

The \$3.5 million was approved by the New York Power Authority trustees and will be used for final engineering and design work for the Niagara Gorge Corridor project. Construction involves removing eight acres of pavement and opening up about 140 acres of green space along the Niagara Gorge rim between Niagara Falls State Park and Whirlpool and DeVeaux Woods State Parks.

Niagara Falls State Park is the oldest state park in the U.S. and sees about 8 million visitors a year. The Niagara Scenic Parkway, formerly known as the Robert Moses Parkway, was built by the New York Power Authority in the 1950’s as part of the construction of NYPA’s Niagara Power Project.

Earlier this year, the Governor **announced** a transformative plan to replace the underutilized two-mile stretch of the Robert Moses Parkway with open space and scenic overlooks to make the waterfront more accessible. The \$42 million project will be funded by NYPA, under an agreement with USA Niagara, a division of Empire State Development. NYPA owns about 71 percent of the land where the parkway will be removed. The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation is also contributing \$2 million toward the project.

“Niagara Falls ranks among the world’s greatest natural attractions, and today’s announcement affirms our commitment to making this wonder more accessible to the millions of people who visit our region every year,” **said Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul.** “This project, in addition to the improvements already made to Niagara Falls State Park, ensures that tourism will continue to play a critical role in Western New York’s economic

rebirth. Governor Cuomo and NYPA are continuing their leadership in restoring one of New York State's true gems to its full potential."

Empire State Development President, CEO & Commissioner Howard Zemsky said, "Moving forward on the transformation of the Niagara Scenic Parkway's northern section is great news for Niagara Falls. The project will allow for direct recreational access to the Niagara River, and the region will greatly benefit from removing this physical and psychological barrier that has impeded the Niagara Gorge and Niagara Falls neighborhoods for decades."

Gil C. Quiniones, NYPA president and CEO, said "NYPA always strives to be a dedicated steward of the land where our facilities are located. This project will enhance the Falls experience and make the area that much more of a special place to visit."

State Parks Commissioner Rose Harvey said "This project will be the largest expansion of Niagara Falls State Park. The Niagara Gorge and its' trails are spectacular and we look forward to enhancing the recreational opportunities along the Gorge for everyone to enjoy."

Congressman Brian Higgins said, "This is a great continuation of an effort to reconnect the City of Niagara Falls with its waterfront. Removal of the Parkway represents a lifting of a physical barrier forced on city residents decades ago that has loomed over the opportunity for Niagara Falls to reach its full potential. As we tear down this structure we will build up a community and one of the greatest destinations in the world."

Senator Rob Ortt said, "Opening up access to the waterfront will pave way for more scenic views and opportunities for residents and visitors. This project will serve as a catalyst to stimulate the economy, increase tourism and move the city forward."

Niagara Falls Mayor Paul Dyster said, “This is another exciting step forward as we continue to work towards enhancing the Niagara experience through recreational tourism, and reconnect residents and tourists alike with our world-class waterfront. We are grateful to Governor Cuomo, the New York Power Authority trustees and our partners in government for their continued investment in our future and look forward to the many exciting things to still to come.”

The new design will enable new recreation opportunities, including scenic overlooks and trails that could be used for hiking, cycling and cross-country skiing and is intended to reflect the region’s renewed focus on economic development.

In 2014, the Power Authority provided up to \$2 million for the preliminary engineering and environmental clearances. The new funding will provide for final design and construction documents for the removal of parkway, the reconstruction of Whirlpool Street and Third Street, native plant landscaping and construction of a comprehensive trail system. [See aerial renderings of the Niagara Corridor Project.](#)

Removal of the parkway is expected to start in early 2018 and take about two years. The road is partially owned by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and is maintained and operated by the New York State Department of Transportation, which will oversee the project construction.