



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patrick M. Gallivan

## Senator Gallivan Helps Dedicate New Rail Bridge at Letchworth State Park

JIM RANNEY May 24, 2018

| ISSUE: **INFRASTRUCTURE, NEW YORK STATE PARKS**



State leaders and transportation representatives today announced the completion of the new \$75 million freight rail bridge over the Genesee River gorge at Letchworth State Park. The new bridge will enable the Norfolk Southern Railway to continue safe, cost-competitive, and reliable service across the Finger Lakes Region. Located in the Town of Portage, Livingston County, and the Town of Genesee Falls, Wyoming County, the bridge supports "Finger Lakes Forward," the region's comprehensive strategy to revitalize communities and

grow the economy.

In December 2014, the state announced federal approval of the plan to build a new arch bridge to replace the historic Portageville Bridge carrying the Norfolk Southern Railway Southern Tier Line. Freight rail service on the new bridge began in December 2017 and the bridge's completion was celebrated today with a ceremony at Letchworth State Park in Castile, Wyoming County.

The bridge was identified in the New York State Rail Plan as one of the ten most significant rail bottlenecks in the state. In 2011, the Regional Economic Development Council's Strategic Plan identified replacement of the bridge among their five-year projects to address barriers to economic growth.

The design and construction of the \$75 million bridge project was funded with \$59.5 million from Norfolk Southern and \$15.5 million from New York State, including a \$2 million grant from the Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council and \$13.5 million in state and federal funds provided from the New York State Department of Transportation.

The single-track bridge was constructed just to the south of the old Portageville Bridge, which was built in 1875 and was a prominent feature in Letchworth State Park for more than a century. The new bridge has a 483-foot arch, a total length of 963 feet, and sits 235 feet above the Genesee River.

The new bridge makes shipping less costly and more efficient by allowing train cars to be fully loaded, which was not previously possible as the old bridge had weight restrictions. In addition, trains can travel over the new bridge at 30 miles per hour, up from the 10 mile-per-hour restriction the old bridge carried.

Senator Patrick M. Gallivan said, "The formal dedication of the new Genesee Arch Bridge is a celebration of years of planning and hard work. We can all marvel at the ingenuity of the engineers who designed the bridge in such a way that it not only meets the transportation and safety needs of the 21st century, it restores the Genesee River to its natural state and compliments the beauty of Letchworth State Park. This new span will support the economy of the Southern Tier for years to come and is a symbol of our bright future."

State Department of Transportation Acting Commissioner Paul A. Karas said, "This beautiful new rail bridge is going to help modernize freight rail service and improve the safety and reliability of this critical connection. Governor Cuomo is improving transportation infrastructure across New York State and this new bridge is an important step that will boost commerce in the region and across the state."

State Parks Commissioner Rose Harvey said, "The completion of this new rail bridge complements the beauty of Letchworth State Park as park visitors will continue to marvel at one of the more impressive structures spanning the picturesque Genesee River gorge. I applaud Governor Cuomo for taking the necessary actions that have resulted in a safer, more efficient rail bridge that will serve the Genesee and Finger Lakes communities for many years to come."

Senator Catharine Young said, "I am proud to offer my congratulations to Norfolk Southern on the completion of the new Portageville Bridge in Letchworth State Park. A stunning span that complements the breathtaking views of the park's Genesee River Gorge, the new bridge will significantly improve freight transportation on the vital Southern Tier Line while strengthening the economic link between markets in the Midwest and Northeast. With significant investments by New York State and Norfolk Southern, it is clear that everyone realized the critical importance of this project. Today is a day to celebrate this extraordinary

accomplishment, the partnerships that made it possible and the tremendous economic impact it will have on our region."

Norfolk Southern CEO James A. Squires said, "The successful partnership we are here to celebrate demonstrates that big things can be accomplished when the private sector and the public sector work together to achieve common goals. The new Genesee Arch Bridge is literally a bridge to the future. It represents our shared commitment to support jobs and economic growth that will benefit businesses and communities across New York for generations to come."

The Southern Tier Line is a critical freight rail link between Buffalo and Binghamton, and provides connections to Canada and the Eastern Seaboard of the United States. The route also provides interchange connections to 11 short line railroads.

Representatives from Norfolk Southern and six federal agencies worked collaboratively on this project including, the Federal Highway Administration; the Environmental Protection Agency; the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service; the National Park Service; the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. State agencies involved include the Department of Transportation; the Department of Environmental Conservation; and the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.