

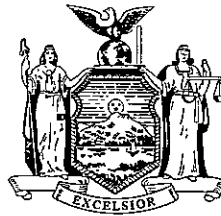
430 CAPITOL  
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12247  
(518) 455-3131

41 S. MAIN STREET  
ONEONTA, NEW YORK 13820  
(607) 432-5524

E-MAIL  
SEWARD@NYSENATE.GOV

WEBSITE  
SEWARD.NYSENATE.GOV

THE SENATE  
STATE OF NEW YORK



**JAMES L. SEWARD**  
SENATOR, 51ST DISTRICT

ASSISTANT REPUBLICAN CONFERENCE LEADER  
ON CONFERENCE OPERATIONS

CHAIRMAN  
INSURANCE COMMITTEE

COMMITTEES  
RULES  
FINANCE  
EDUCATION  
HIGHER EDUCATION  
AGRICULTURE  
HEALTH  
MENTAL HEALTH

October 16, 2014

Ms. Joan McDonald, Commissioner  
New York State Department of Transportation  
50 Wolf Road  
Albany, NY 12232

**RE: ROUTE 80 – OTSEGO LAKE (OTSEGO COUNTY)**

Dear Commissioner McDonald,

Let me take this opportunity to express my thanks to you personally for calling for a re-evaluation of all issues associated with the Route 80 project along the western side of Otsego Lake (Otsego County). As you know, the project has generated some not inconsiderable controversy.

Residents and property owners along Route 80, those directly and indirectly involved, are very concerned about the trajectory of the state's plans. Concerns of my constituents focus first on the taking of property and the broad impact of losing land upon which they have paid taxes, and dwelled, for decades. The uncertainty of the status of their ownership has produced a ripple effect by which others currently unaffected are worried about the viability of their property rights and local governments are concerned about the short-term sustainability of land values and therefore, the tax base which funds the school, town and county.

The second concern surrounds the nature of the proposed repair, particularly its aesthetic and environmental effects on a lake renowned for its beauty. I would urge DOT to design a repair project that considers aesthetic, environmental and historic concerns and offers less of an impact on property owners and residents.

Let me also share with you the third principal concern, and it relates to the department's communication and information-sharing on the project. I understand that DOT has insisted that any property owner seeking information gathered by DOT about his or her own land file a request under the Freedom of Information Law (FOIL). This is astonishing. Just share the information. Along those lines, the residents of the involved area feel that DOT simply hasn't made the effort to listen to residents nor to be on site to understand the significance of the project's impacts.



We share a desire that our state transportation projects achieve the goals of safety for the motoring public and an enhanced transportation infrastructure. But how we achieve those goals says much about us as a government. And unfortunately, the property owners in the middle of the Route 80 project feel they have been left in the dark and, when the light has been on, treated cavalierly.

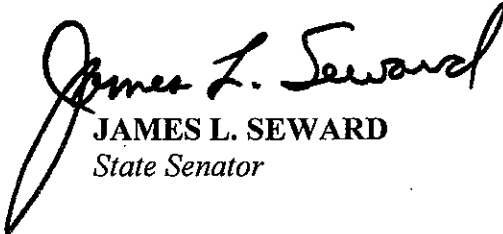
I would ask DOT, in its review, to step back and look at the project with new eyes, including a look at not just construction, but equally important, the process. I urge you to re-evaluate the goals and objectives, and determine what is needed to achieve those goals with *the least disruption*.

I fully appreciate that legal issues abound in any transportation project of this scale. However, I am confident that a solution can be developed that provides an improved road and addresses many of the concerns that have been raised.

Writing for the residents, local governments and property owners, I can say that we want an improved, safer road. But it's important that DOT make an extraordinary effort to do so in a cooperative, collaborative manner that recognizes generations of property interests.

I would be glad to speak with you further.

Sincerely yours



**JAMES L. SEWARD**  
*State Senator*

JLS:ddjt