



**TESTIMONY OF FRANK G. HOARE, ESQ.  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
NEW YORK STATE THRUWAY AUTHORITY  
JOINT HEARING OF THE LEGISLATIVE FISCAL AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEES  
FEBRUARY 6, 2025**

Good afternoon Chairs Krueger, Pretlow, Cooney, Magnarelli, Comrie, and Braunstein, and distinguished members of the Senate and Assembly Finance, Transportation and Corporations Committees; thank you for inviting me to speak today. My name is Frank Hoare, and I am the Executive Director of the New York State Thruway Authority.

The Thruway Authority is committed to its mission to operate and maintain a reliable and affordable, user-fee supported superhighway delivering high levels of safety and service. The importance of making safety a priority was tragically emphasized to us in 2024. Two Thruway Authority employees, Vincent Giammarva and Stephen Ebling died, and another, Mark Vara, was seriously injured in separate incidents while working on the Thruway. It reminds us all that when our workers are out on the Thruway, there is never a routine day. My goal at the Authority, is prioritizing safety in everything we do, and you will hear this throughout my testimony today.

In 2024, the Thruway Authority processed more than 403 million transactions and motorists drove 8.2 billion miles on our system. To that end, the 2025 Thruway Authority budget represents a total financial commitment of just under \$1.4 billion. It funds the resources required to maintain and enhance the current levels of maintenance, safety and service our customers expect and deserve. This balanced spending plan includes \$500 million for operations including \$71 million for State Police Troop T, \$477 million for the capital program and \$383 million for debt service.

Overall, \$2.7 billion will be invested over the next five years into the Thruway's 2025 – 2029 Capital Plan, a \$742 million increase, or approximately 38 percent, since the approval of a multi-year toll adjustment plan that went into effect beginning on January 1, 2024. The increased investment will lead to work on approximately 61 percent of the Thruway's more than 2,800 pavement lane miles as well as the replacement or rehabilitation of 20 percent of the Thruway's 817 bridges. Bridge work will include replacements, rehabilitations, painting, joint replacements, and vertical clearance improvements. This work translates to a smoother riding surface for motorists, enhanced safety features, and a visual reminder of our reinvestment of our customer's toll dollars.

Underscoring its importance to the state and region, the Thruway is a dependable and cost-effective transportation system and serves as a vital link to interstate travel providing a major route of access to our state's tourism anchors. It's also a principal artery of commerce and serves as a catalyst of the state's economic activity with 16 percent of our total traffic coming from commercial vehicles and about one-third from out of state.

The Thruway Authority is operated and maintained solely as a user-fee system and is **NOT** supported by any dedicated federal, state or local taxpayer funding. Our toll revenue goes directly toward making the Thruway one of the safest highways in the nation. Through fiscally responsible asset and program management, the Thruway continues to offer some of the lowest toll rates in the country. The Thruway's base passenger toll rate is less than \$0.05 per mile, compared to the Ohio Turnpike (\$0.06 per mile), the New Jersey Turnpike (up to \$0.39 per mile) and the Pennsylvania Turnpike (more than \$0.16 per mile).

The Thruway is one of the safest roadways in the country with a fatality rate far below the nationwide index. In 2023, the Thruway's fatality rate was 0.25 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles traveled as compared to 1.17 nationwide for the first half of 2024. Even though our numbers are low, there is more work to be done, and I am confident that our dedicated

employees are advancing initiatives that continue our commitment to safety for our motorists and employees.

An initiative that's changing motorists' behavior and improving safety on the Thruway is the Automated Work Zone Speed Enforcement (AWZSE) pilot program sponsored by Chair Magnarelli in the Assembly and signed into law by Governor Hochul in September 2021. The Governor's 2026 Executive Budget includes a proposal to make this program permanent and increase penalties, and we would appreciate your support of this vital safety program.

The AWZSE program is a joint effort by the Thruway Authority and New York State Department of Transportation. The goal of the program is to improve work zone and highway safety by encouraging motorists to slow down in work zones. Since its inception, more than 130,000 Notices of Liability have been issued on the Thruway alone. Nearly 7,000 violations have been sent to repeat offenders – those motorists who drove more than 11 mph over the posted speed limit through a work zone twice or three times in an 18-month period. In November 2024, the Thruway Authority mailed 331 letters to offenders with more than three violations including commercial trucking companies and individuals.

Data from the AWZSE program indicated that across the four Thruway Divisions – New York, Albany, Syracuse, and Buffalo – average speed in 45 mph zones dropped from 45 mph in June 2023 to 38 mph in June 2024; average speed in 55 mph zones continued steadily at 48 mph. Motorists are changing their behavior and slowing down in work zones.

The Thruway Authority's 2025 Budget allocates a total of \$4.1 million to improving worker safety, including work zone equipment and traffic control safety supplies. Of that total, \$300,000 is a direct result of additional revenue from the AWZSE program. Equipment includes high visibility personal protection equipment, truck mounted lights to increase visibility during night work, and truck mounted speed feedback signs that have been shown to cause drivers to reduce their speed.

Last year, to better coordinate and address employee safety, I established the Work Zone Safety Task Force (WZTF). The WZTF is a Thruway-wide effort that includes staff from various program areas to review and revise current policies and procedures, develop and implement mechanisms for work zone intrusion tracking, increase driver awareness, minimize traffic exposure to employees and close call prevention. The WZTF is intended to provide the cross-communication and coordination needed to address work zone safety issues completely and consistently across all departments.

Another safety initiative that the Authority is launching is a pilot program in partnership with iCone. iCone products transmit real-time roadway information. This initiative will involve equipping 50 heavy-duty plow trucks with devices that can provide real-time data to popular vehicle navigation applications. For example, during snow operations, the device connects with navigation systems to alert drivers about potential upcoming hazards, such as snowplow activities. This alerts motorists to be aware and to navigate the area safely, significantly enhancing driving efficiency and ensuring the safety of plow operators. The devices will be installed and operational in select plows in each of our four Maintenance Divisions (Niagara, Weedsport, Albany, and Harriman Maintenance Sections) where the highest number of plow crashes took place in the last five years. If successful, the Authority will look to install iCone devices in all Thruway plow trucks.

The Authority also undertook a statewide commercial vehicle enforcement campaign last year. This campaign was designed to reduce bridge strikes caused by overweight vehicles. The enforcement initiative was conducted in partnership with the New York State Police Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Unit (CVEU). During the months of October, November and December, 30 enforcement details were held in various regions along the Thruway leading to 7,301 violations issued including 31 for overweight vehicles.

Since 2020, there have been 231 bridge hits reported on the New York State Thruway's 570-mile system, including 56 reported bridge strikes in 2024. One of the most serious incidents included

the South Broadway overpass in South Nyack which was struck by an overheight tractor trailer on August 31, 2023. Due to the hit, all southbound lanes of I-87/I-287 were closed for 15 hours on September 9, 2023, to facilitate the removal of two damaged girders to stabilize the overpass.

The Authority is leveraging technology for overheight vehicle bridge strike prevention by its launch of a pilot program to install and implement an overheight vehicle detection system at two locations in Central New York. When an overheight vehicle drives past the sensors, it triggers the system, and a sign is illuminated warning the driver that their vehicle is overheight.

Bridge strikes are an issue that every state has to deal with, and over the last several years, the Thruway Authority and the State of New York have implemented measures using technologies aimed at preventing these incidents. We are also taking a multi-pronged approach which includes working with commercial operators because the responsibility lies with them. Each driver is required to know the rules of the road – similar to the speed limit and other driving rules; using awareness campaigns such as ‘Know Your Height’ on multiple platforms such as digital highway message boards, social media and the Thruway Authority’s website; partnering with New York State Police and their Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Unit to carry out enforcement operations. For the past several years, the Authority has increased its vigilance in pursuing claims from motorists who damage Thruway property. The Claims Unit processes more than 1,000 property and equipment damage claims per year. In 2024, the Authority’s Claims Unit recovered approximately \$9.4 million.

The Authority is also capitalizing on its existing infrastructure by using its fiber network that runs along its right-of-way. We plan to build on the public broadband infrastructure initiatives that Governor Hochul has undertaken over the last few years. The Governor announced in her 2025 State of the State address that the Authority, in partnership with the ConnectALL Office, will launch the Excelsior Broadband Network. The goal of this partnership is to expand and increase mobile connectivity and reliability along the Thruway system and beyond.

The Authority's robust fiber program is already connecting New Yorkers, and this new initiative will further the Authority's commitment to delivering on New York's transportation needs with reliable, high speed, and expanded connectivity and reliable cell phone service across the entire Thruway. Mobile connectivity is essential to motorists traveling across New York State, especially in rural areas, and reliable mobile service is a vital safety component if a motorist needs assistance.

The Governor Mario M. Cuomo Bridge (GMMCB) is an important corridor in the region. Because of the safety aspects added to the construction of the new bridge, crashes have decreased more than 38 percent from 2016 (the last time traffic was on the Tappan Zee Bridge for a full year) compared with 2023.

Our commitment to safety extends to our service areas that are spread across the Thruway. These locations are open 24 hours a day, where motorists can take a break, get food and coffee, wait out inclement weather, and refuel or charge their vehicles. Our service areas are being redesigned as part of a \$450 million private investment to redevelop and modernize all 27 service areas. Twenty-four of the 27 are complete and by the end of the year, all the modernized service areas will be open.

No toll dollars, nor any federal, state or local taxpayer funding is being used for the construction related to this project. The new service areas allow our customers to experience a wider variety and improved dining options and other amenities including exterior seating with access to Taste NY farm markets, playgrounds and pet walking areas with comfort stations. Expanded commercial trucking amenities at select locations include increased parking, shower and laundry facilities, and dedicated lounges.

As part of the service area project, we have committed to increasing the availability of electric vehicle charging. Our motorists expect they will be able to safely and reliably charge their vehicle while traveling across the state. As of today, the Thruway has nearly 100 electric vehicle charging

points along the I-87, I-90 and I-190 corridors. With the existing infrastructure, we are exceeding our customers' current EV charging needs for passenger vehicles. Our charging stations are comprised of a combination of fast charging, or Level 3 high-speed chargers, which can charge a vehicle in about 30 minutes. These Level 3 chargers are primarily located at Thruway service areas. There are also Level 2 chargers, which take approximately four or more hours to fully charge a vehicle. Level 2 chargers are primarily located at nine commuter lots directly off the Thruway. Each service area will have a minimum of four high speed chargers, with some having up to eight charging points. This is in addition to the chargers already installed at Thruway commuter lots and three Welcome Centers.

In addition to passenger EV charging stations and in light of New York's Advanced Clean Truck (ACT) rule, the Authority has taken steps for anticipated demand for medium and heavy-duty electric vehicle (MHDEV) charging. These actions include initiation of activities to identify the needs for expanded infrastructure to accommodate projected MHDEV use that will occur with increased manufacturing and expansion of use by the trucking industry. This will also assist with the conversion of the Thruway Authority's MHDEV fleet to zero emission vehicles. These planning actions involve stakeholders from electric industry groups including CALSTART, which is a nonprofit organization that works with businesses and governments to develop clean transportation solutions. Other stakeholders include the Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI), and truck hauling groups. The Authority also plans to use the results of New York State Energy and Research Development Authority's (NYSERDA) MHDEV market study, expected in early 2025, to inform expansion decisions.

Although the Authority is moving forward with alternate fuel adoption, electric utility limitations are a challenge beyond our scope, therefore, we are actively working with our utility partners and have been collaborating to analyze the electricity capacity available at service areas. This analysis is to determine where sufficient energy capacity for the MHDEV charging infrastructure exists, and determine what utility upgrades may be necessary, including the use of electrical battery storage technology.

The Thruway represents one component of the Governor's clean energy goals. The Authority is committed to providing EV charging services for our customers and scaling up as the demand increases. Furthermore, the Authority continues to monitor the growing need for MDHEV charging infrastructure. While the Authority evaluates EV needs throughout its system, we will continue to work collaboratively with our state partners in a cross-agency working group led by the Governor's office. This working group meets regularly to discuss and strategize the use of EV funds across participating agencies and authorities.

Enforcement continues to remain a priority. Tolls represent 90 percent of our revenue and without collecting tolls, we will not be able to operate, maintain and enhance our system. It's critical to balance toll collection with enforcement, and we use a variety of enforcement tools to ensure that everyone pays their fair share. These tools protect the safety and affordability of our 570-mile superhighway. Most importantly, enforcement protects the 96% of toll payers who use the Thruway and pay their tolls.

The Authority continues to make it easy for our customers to pay their toll bills. The Tolls by Mail Enhancement Act is another important law in our effort to improve the customer experience. If a customer does not have an E-ZPass account, which is the most convenient way to pay tolls, a bill is sent to the vehicle's registered owner using the address on file with DMV. Motorists must make sure their vehicle registration address is up to date with DMV. Customers also have several ways to pay. The vehicle's owner can pay online; use cash at more than 1,000 locations around the state; over the phone; via the mobile app; or of course, by mail. If customers do not pay, they face violation fees, being sent to collections and for the more egregious cases, registration suspension. In August 2022, the Thruway Authority resumed its registration suspension program. To date there have been more than 15,000 cases, with more than \$15 million in debt collected.

We are committed to collecting every dollar owed to us. We will work with all of our customers who want to pay but to be clear – large outstanding toll bills do not materialize overnight. We must have effective enforcement in place for those who do not pay.



The Thruway Authority supports the state's Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise (MWBE) Program and continues to demonstrate its commitment to support MWBE inclusion. MWBEs have been a sector of the economy that has traditionally struggled to break into the horizontal construction arena. We are exploring new ways to further expand our outreach efforts and create opportunities to increase overall participation Thruway-wide.

Our work includes integrating MWBE goals in all our procurement processes and practices; facilitating relationships between our prime contractors and MWBE firms; conducting training events on how to do business with the Authority; and focusing on outreach strategies to attract MWBE firms. During 2024, we continued to enhance opportunities for MWBEs on Thruway contracts. Our utilization increased more than seven percent to 28 percent and our Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business utilization is up to almost four and a half percent.

Lastly, I want to echo Governor Hochul's steadfast commitment to ensuring all New Yorkers have every opportunity available to them, no matter who they are or where they come from. New York is a beacon of respect and civility with the strongest protections in the nation, and the Thruway Authority remains an environment where everyone feels safe to share their ideas, challenge norms, and participate fully in our mission.

To conclude, I want to emphasize my commitment to Governor Hochul's charge to me to continue to ensure that the Thruway remains the safest, most convenient, and affordable highway in the country.

I recognize and am grateful for the commitment and professionalism of the 1,800 employees of the Thruway Authority. They work hard every day to serve and protect all who use the Thruway.

Thank you for your time. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.