

Advocacy Day

March 7 - March 8, 2017

Over 750 County and Town Highway Officials Advocate in Albany
Paving the Way for Increased State Funding for Local Roads, Culverts and Bridges



ALBANY, NY — Over 750 county and town highway superintendents, public works commissioners and highway industry professionals converged at the New York State Capitol and Legislative Office Building in Albany on March 9th for the “Local Roads Matter” advocacy campaign. The groups urged the governor and state lawmakers to make the maintenance and repair of local roads and bridges a top priority in the state budget.

By joining forces, the New York State County Highway Superintendents Association (NYSCHSA) and the New York State Association of Town Superintendents of Highways (NYSAOTSOH) will pave the way for increased budgetary funding and secure programs to assist local roads, culverts and bridges.

Both groups strongly support the governor's proposal for a five-year Highway Capital Program for the New York State Department of Transportation (NYS DOT) and urged the Legislature to support it as well.

"Having a long-term funding plan is essential to the planning process," said Tracy Eldridge, president of the NYSCHSA and commissioner of public works for Hamilton County. "With a five-year plan in place, municipalities will be provided more financial clarity that is essential when dealing with roads and bridges."

The current conditions of New York's infrastructure are problematic, with 34 percent of local bridges being deficient and 48 percent of road pavements rated fair or poor and getting worse. "When the safety of New York residents is at stake, our leaders need to be wise and invest in CHIPs," said Jeff Griswold, NYSAOTSOH president and highway superintendent for the Town of Preble, Cortland County, whose groups handed out a visual reminder of Wise brand potato chips throughout the day.

Local governments are responsible for 87 percent of New York State's 112,500-mile highway system and half of the 18,000 bridges. A safe, efficient statewide highway infrastructure is necessary for trade, economic development and revitalization, schools, businesses, health and hospital facilities, emergency responders, and the traveling public.

The groups also brought attention to the issue of funding parity to state leaders. Currently, the agreed upon 2015-19 five-year capital plan the Metropolitan Transportation Authority is \$26.1 billion, with the governor pledging \$8.3 billion toward closing its funding gap. The proposed Department of Transportation's program is funded at \$20.1 billion, a record \$6 billion gap between the two programs.

"True parity allows CHIPs and Marchiselli aid to be funded at appropriate levels consistent with need," said Griswold. "While we support the investment in downstate transit, our roads, culverts and bridges throughout the state need equal and fair funding. The Legislature now has the opportunity to fix this inequity and restore parity between these programs by funding both at \$26.1 billion."

The NYSCHSA and the NYSAOTSOH were pleased to voice their support for the PAVE NY program and a modified BRIDGE NY program. The PAVE NY program is

a proposed new \$1 billion program that will split funding between state and local pavement projects over the remaining four years of the five-year NYS DOT capital program. The associations recommend the PAVE NY monies be distributed through the CHIPs formula and be added to the base funding level.

The newly proposed \$1 billion BRIDGE NY is to be distributed via a competitive solicitation in which local governments will be able to apply directly for a part of the approximately \$100 million expected per year. “Modifications are needed in the BRIDGE NY program to make clear that this process will assure a 50-50 percent funding split between state and local projects, include culverts, and be distributed fairly throughout the state,” said Eldridge.

To address the critical condition of local transportation infrastructure, both associations urged the Legislature and the governor to include, as part of the final 2016-2017 State Budget, the following program enhancements:

- *Five-Year Capital Plan for the NYS DOT;*
- *Parity funding between the NYS DOT and the MTA Five-Year Capital Programs, funding both at \$26.2 billion;*
- *Support PAVE NY, a new \$1 billion pavement program;*
- *Support an additional \$100 million in CHIPs above PAVE NY for a total of \$690 million annually for the next four years; and*
- *BRIDGE NY split evenly between state and local projects, expanded to include culverts and funded at \$150 million annually.*

Local roads are a crucial part of the state’s infrastructure. As much as half of all vehicle miles traveled in New York State are on local roads. The maintenance, repair and strategic replacement of existing transportation infrastructure are required for safety, mobility and for the state to remain economically competitive. Providing much-needed funds for local roads and bridges also sustains jobs -- both public and private -- in highway-related industries and professions