

**TESTIMONY OF MATTHEW J. DRISCOLL  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
NEW YORK STATE THRUWAY AUTHORITY**

**JOINT HEARING OF THE LEGISLATIVE FISCAL AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEES  
February 15, 2022**

Chairs Krueger, Weinstein, Kennedy and Magnarelli and distinguished members of the Senate and Assembly Fiscal and Transportation Committees; thank you for inviting me to speak today. My name is Matthew Driscoll, and I am the Executive Director of the New York State Thruway Authority.

The Governor Thomas E. Dewey Thruway is a 570-mile superhighway spanning New York State, and is one of the longest toll systems in the United States. Underscoring its importance to the state, region and nation, the Thruway serves as a vital link to long distance interstate travel and provides the major route of access for visitors to our state's tourism anchors – it is also a principal artery of commerce and serves as a primary catalyst of the state's economic activity.

The Thruway Authority is operated and maintained solely as a user only fee system and is not supported by any state or local taxpayer funding.

The 2022 Thruway Authority budget represents a total financial commitment of \$1.1 billion. It is a budget that is balanced; provides the necessary resources to maintain the current levels of maintenance, safety, and service; and maximizes funding for critical infrastructure rehabilitation projects in the Authority's multi-year Capital Plan.

The Authority has not been immune to the unprecedented challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic; however, we remain steadfast in our commitment to our customers. We have continued the high level of maintenance, safety improvements, and modernization projects that our customers have come to expect.

In November 2021, the Authority substantially completed ahead of schedule, the systemwide conversion to cashless tolling. This conversion began in 2016 on the then Tappan Zee Bridge, followed by the remaining fixed-price barriers in 2018. During the peak activity of the project, a workforce of more than 800 workers from across the state performed work along the I-87 and I-90 corridors, spanning 18 counties. Since November 2020, more than 400 million transactions have been successfully recorded at Thruway cashless tolling locations. Cashless tolling enables motorists to travel the Thruway without stopping to pay tolls. This is safer, environmentally friendly, and a more convenient way to pay for tolls. We continue to provide education and marketing through a multi-platform campaign to raise awareness and promote E-ZPass usage.

Also, in November 2021, the \$135 million Interstate 95 Reconstruction Project in Westchester County was completed enhancing safety and traffic flow in this busy corridor. This project began in 2018 and focused on the final one mile stretch from exit 22 (Port Chester - Rye - Midland Avenue) to the Connecticut state line, which serves more than 140,000 motorists every day.

In July 2021, we began construction on a \$450 million public-private partnership project to redevelop and modernize our 27 service areas located across the Thruway. This multi-year project will include new and updated buildings, upgraded amenities, healthier food and beverage options, improved commercial trucking services and amenities, and the installation of 120 electric vehicle charging stations creating an end-to-end connection systemwide. This project will enhance our customers' traveling experience and is entirely funded through this public-private partnership, so no toll dollars or state tax dollars are being used.

Our work to modernize and maintain the Thruway is only a part of the equation for our customers' experience. We are continually focused on safety along the Thruway. On October 6, 2021, the Authority held a virtual public hearing regarding the creation of a pilot program establishing automated speed violation monitoring systems in work zones by means of photo devices. This hearing allowed us to gather feedback regarding the legislation passed by this

legislature and signed into law by Governor Hochul on Sept. 6, 2021. On behalf of the men and women who work on out on our system, I want to publicly say thank you for your support for this important initiative.

This year we have two proposals in the Executive Budget for which we seek your support. Both proposals will create efficiencies for the Authority and for contractors. Part F of the Transportation, Economic Development and Environmental Conservation (TED), Article VII bill, authorizes the Authority to use electronic bidding for public works contracts. This provision updates the law to reflect current practices for bid submissions while preserving the ability to also submit paper copies. This provision has been granted to NYDOT and the MTA. The second proposal, TED Part G, updates the value of procurement contracts to \$50,000 from \$15,000 conforming to thresholds for discretionary purchases by other state agencies such as DOT and allows the Thruway Authority to piggyback off contracts of other governmental entities as state agencies currently can.

Combining safety and technology, the Authority launched a pilot program modernizing our operations using drones in partnership with New York based nonprofit NUAIR. This initiative, at no cost to the Authority, has the potential to increase efficiency and improve safety while lowering costs for inspections of bridges, culverts, and pavement, along with mapping, surveying and countless other uses. The benefits of drone use include fewer lane closures during inspections which reduces impacts to motorists; safety improvements for inspectors; and decreased inspection costs.

These accomplishments and more have been possible because of the commitment from the men and women of the Thruway Authority. Their dedication and professionalism during these most trying times has kept the Thruway a safe, reliable system for all motorists, and has been integral in allowing for the continued movement of goods throughout the state. Keep in mind that during the lockdown of 2020, our staff came to work every day to plow the roads and maintain the system. Our employees that work out on the roadway are key to our success,

they deserve to have a safe work environment as much as any other employee. As part of that commitment, we continue to promote awareness about the Move Over Law and look forward to the day when we can be back out interacting with motorists at our service areas to talk about the importance of the law.

In closing, please know that I remain committed to keeping the Thruway the safest and most convenient means of travel in the state. Whether one is commuting to work, visiting friends or family, enjoying the recreational opportunities around our state, or supporting the freight economy, the Thruway will take you there. Thank you for your time. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.