



NEW YORK STATE COUNTY HIGHWAY SUPERINTENDENTS ASSOCIATION

New York State County Highway Superintendents Association Joint Legislative Public Hearings on the 2022-2023 Executive Budget Proposal -- Transportation

Good evening Chairs Kreuger and Weinstein and the members of the Senate and Assembly. I am Andrew P. Avery, P.E., President of the New York State County Highway Superintendents Association (NYSCHSA) and Chemung County Public Works Commissioner. Thank you for this opportunity to comment today on the 2022-2023 Executive Budget and its impact on counties' local road and bridge programs.

These comments are submitted to be part of joint testimony with the New York State Association of Town Superintendents of Highways (NYSATSOH). As you know, local roads and bridges make up the bulk of the statewide system. Eighty-seven percent of the roads and over half of the bridges are owned by local governments. This vast system has been underfunded for years predictably resulting in stress on the condition ratings of many roads and bridges throughout the state.

Too often, government prefers to invest in new public infrastructure over addressing the aging and deterioration of existing roads, bridges and culverts across the state. We see the Executive Budget as attempting to strike a balance between these two approaches and look forward to working with you to assure that the rehabilitation and maintenance of local roads and bridges is a priority in the final budget.

When a bridge is failing structurally, it must be either closed or weight limited. When this happens, entire communities are impacted. The job of the highway superintendent and public works commissioner is to prevent this from happening. This effort requires focus and additional funding.

Governor Kathy Hochul has presented an Executive Budget that includes a new Five-Year Transportation Capital Program sized at \$32.8 billion. The plan incorporates substantial increases in federal funding for transportation infrastructure. However, upon close examination, very little of this increased federal commitment is available for the local systems.

The Executive Budget

Recognizing that local roads, bridges and culverts have been underfunded for years, and much of the local system is not federal aid eligible, the Governor seeks to boost the state's commitment for local programs in the Executive Budget. For example, her proposal restores the Extreme Winter Recovery appropriation at \$100 million and appropriates another \$100 million in support of State Touring Routes. These two programs are critical in responding to road damage from the effects of freezing and thawing temperatures and for maintaining sections of the highway system that do not fit into preexisting state aid programs.

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The Executive Budget also funds PAVE-NY at \$150 million per year over the next 5 years, and proposes BRIDGE-NY funding double to \$200 million per year. The CHIPS program, the life blood of most local highway departments, is held at \$538 million.

Trends in Road and Bridge Conditions are Concerning

Despite record local transportation funding in the current budget, the last few years has seen the worst recorded decline in the state's pavement conditions. Since 2006, the state highway surface rated poor or fair has increased from 36% in 2016 to 45% in 2020. Over the same period, pavement rated good to excellent has decreased from 64% to 55%. When we see trends like this, it's time to worry. This is not a course that can be easily slowed, let alone reversed. Due to the aging system and deferred maintenance from inadequate state and local funding, nearly half of major locally and state-maintained roads and highways in New York are in poor or mediocre condition. According to the transportation research organization TRIP, driving on rough roads costs the average New York driver \$7.7 billion annually in additional vehicle operating costs statewide.

Operation Pave Our Potholes (POP)

The Governor identifies the poor condition of many state and local roads and highway as a major problem and proposes a new initiative called Operation Pave Our Potholes (POP). If enacted, POP would provide \$1 billion over five years to resurface and renew the state's worst roadway pavements with half of the funding going to local governments through a distribution formula not yet identified. NYSCHSA and NYSAOTSOH are urging that the local POP funds be distributed through either the CHIPS or EWR formula. This assures every municipality in the state receives an equitable allocation of POP funding.

Federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)

The IIJA, also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, reauthorizes for FY2023-FY2026 several surface transportation programs, including the federal-aid highway program, transit programs, highway safety, motor carrier safety, and rail programs. It also marginally increases funding for some of these existing commitments, and creates new programs focused on key infrastructure priorities including rehabilitating bridges in critical need of repair, reducing carbon emissions, increasing system resilience, removing barriers to connecting communities, and improving mobility and access to economic opportunity. For New York, IIJA will mean \$11.5 billion for roads and highways and \$1.9 billion for bridges. However, much of this new bridge money is restricted to bridges on the Federal-Aid Highway System (On-System Bridges).

BRIDGE-NY Good But Not Enough

BRIDGE-NY is a signature program to direct federal and state funding to local bridge and culvert projects throughout the state. BRIDGE NY is helping, but it is not nearly enough. In all three rounds of BRIDGE-NY, the number and value of project applications far exceeded funding available for each region of the state. The chart below clearly indicates this gap between needs and availability of BRIDGE-NY funding.

Round III of the BRIDGE-NY program has been awarded and the continued need for this funding is clearly necessary. Over the last four years, \$678 million was awarded for 231 bridge and 175 culverts projects. This represents only 31.7% and 13.4% of total bridge and culvert applications, respectively. The BRIDGE-NY program limits the number and value of bridge and culvert project applications that can be submitted to the state by each municipality, so the need is demonstratively greater.

Year	Amount \$ Available	Applications	Funded
2016	\$200M (\$20M dedicated to culverts)	Round I: 229 bridges, 366 culverts	93 bridges, 39 culverts
2018	\$262M (\$50M dedicated to culverts)	Round II: 259 bridges, 514 culverts	86 bridges, 79 culverts
2021	\$216M (\$50M dedicated to culverts)	Round III: 240 bridges, 421 culverts	52 bridges, 57 culverts

Periodic review and modifications to the BRIDGE-NY program’s administration will help improve its efficiency and regional balance.

Many Local Bridges Are Considered Off-System

There are almost as many bridges for the category defined as “Local” as there are for “New York State and the Toll Authority”. However, data from the FHWA shows that the number of On-Systems bridges owned by New York State and Tolling Authority are more than three times as many as the number of “Local” bridges. Conversely, the “Local” owns almost 10 times the number of bridges that are Off-System, that is not on the Federal-Aid Highway System, compared to “New York State and the Toll Authority”.

The Off-System bridges in poor condition or fair condition are slightly less than 10 times that for the “New York State and Tolling Authority” bridges.

This ownership disparity and relative condition ratings reinforces the need to assure 100% of the federal funding for Off-System bridges be made available for the local governments as well as providing for a fair and equitable split of the On-System bridge money.

Infrastructure is a municipality’s greatest asset and, as the storm events of the last few years have demonstrated, vitally important to the public and the economy of the State. The repair, rehabilitation, efficient operations, and strategic replacement of existing transportation infrastructure are required for safety, mobility, and for the State to remain economically competitive.

Thousands of New York citizens are employed through the road and bridge construction and maintenance industry. It is estimated that each \$150 million in funding for local roads, bridges and culverts results in up to 4,200 highway construction-related jobs. Fiscal experts agree that borrowing for infrastructure is a prudent investment.

NYSCHSA & NYSAOTSOH 2022-23 BUDGET REQUESTS:

- ✓ Support increasing the CHIPS program to \$788.1 million annually.
- ✓ Support increasing Extreme Winter Recovery funding to \$150 million annually.
- ✓ Support maintaining the local BRIDGE-NY program at \$200 million annually.
- ✓ Support maintaining the local PAVE-NY program at \$150 million annually.
- ✓ Support maintaining the State Touring Route funding program at \$100 million annually.
- ✓ Request that the \$100 million POP program be distributed using the EWR formula.

Local roads are essential, with hundreds of thousands of daily trips allowing New Yorkers and visitors to be part of a great state and an even greater community. These trips are not made exclusively on state roads or local roads or interstate highways. People use both state and local roads and bridges to take them to work, school, doctor's offices, airports, restaurants, and recreational and tourism destinations. Truckers go where the goods need to be delivered: every corner of New York State. Tourists visit our cities and explore the back roads. Agriculture depends on local roads and bridges to get products to market. A seamless, well-maintained transportation system is essential to keeping New York State moving.

Our association appreciates the support of our state elected officials who partner with us to insure we all "get the job done" when it comes to providing the public with a safe and functional statewide transportation system; one that supports jobs and economic growth for our communities.

Our county highway superintendents and public works commissioners continue our commitment to work with you and our county leaders during these difficult times to respond effectively to the challenges of the pandemic, advocate on the state's behalf, and rebuild New York's economy. LOCAL ROADS ARE ESSENTIAL. INVEST IN LOCAL ROADS!

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andrew P. Avery". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial 'A'.

Andrew P. Avery, P.E.
President
New York State County Highway Superintendents Association

February 15, 2022