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The Voice of Long Island's Highway & Infrastructure Professionals

**Marc Herbst, Executive Director
Long Island Contractors' Association, Inc.**

New York State Joint Legislative Hearing on Transportation

Tuesday, January 28, 2020, 9:30 AM

**Hamilton Hearing Room B
Legislative Office Building
Albany, New York**

Chair Krueger and Chair Weinstein, my name is Marc Herbst and I serve as the Executive Director of the Long Island Contractors' Association.

The Long Island Contractors' Association (LICA) represents the interests of Long Island's premier heavy construction general contractors, subcontractors, suppliers and industry supporters. Our industry is focused primarily on building and maintaining our region's vital infrastructure: its highways, bridges and transit systems as well as utilities, water quality and wastewater systems, and other public works. We carry a sense of pride that many of LICA's 160-member firms are multi-generational, family-owned businesses that are located on Long Island, who continue to work and employ neighbors in our communities. Providing nearly 6,200 direct and more than 16,700 jobs (New York State Department of Labor), our industry contributes \$5.4 billion annually to the region's gross regional product (U.S Bureau of Economic Analysis).

While we understand that New York State is facing significant financial headwinds, the Long Island Contractors' Association is incredibly disappointed in the lack of funding identified to be allocated toward Long Island's decrepit roads and bridges. According to

recent studies, 82% of the roads tested are in need of significant repairs, several bridges are structurally deficient while 2,557 are in need of repair. The Executive Budget, however, proposes keeping local funding for infrastructure the same as it has been for the last five years. We urge legislative leaders to identify specific state projects and significantly increase funding for the state's local highway systems.

Governor Andrew Cuomo's 2020-21 state budget proposal does not suggest any enhancements for the CHIPs (The Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program) to support local municipalities, as the statewide funding proposal remains stagnant at \$483 million. During the last five years, the total annual funding for Long Island municipalities (the two counties, two cities, 13 towns and 95 villages) was \$40 million which, for comparative purposes only, is nearly the same amount each of Long Island's 24 school districts receive annually.

Again, not to disparage school aid, but for perspective, the \$483 million currently allotted to maintain all local road systems across all cities, counties, towns and villages throughout New York State, is dwarfed by the new budget's proposed \$826 million statewide school aid *increase* alone. While 31 percent of the state's operating budget goes to fund arts/education, a mere four percent (4%) is dedicated to the transportation operating budget, for roads, highways and other infrastructure used by 100% of New York residents as well as millions of tourists and visitors. We believe greater public fiscal policy support should be focused on transportation.

Frankly, on the capital side of the budget, CHIPs funding levels are miniscule in comparison to the need to fix our crumbling local roads and streets. We suggest the funding levels should be doubled. We believe an additional allocation of funds may be secured through addressing a formula constraint on the New York State Gas Tax. The formula currently restricts the applicability of the sales tax beyond the first two dollars assessed. Removing this constraint and dedicating these new resources specifically to the CHIPs program would significantly benefit all the local governments throughout the state.

With respect to capital funding for the state highway program, we are disappointed the executive proposal limits its plan to two years, rather than a traditional five-year program. We fear this limitation will stifle long-range planning and design of needed projects in future years. Nonetheless, we are appreciative of the proposed increase

suggested over the next two years, which is an increase of \$3 million of the final two years of the concluding five-year program.

The plan, however, is silent on where the funding is to be designated for this new capital program. We urge legislators to identify the specific projects that are envisioned to receive the planned financial support.

The Long Island community has advocated several projects of regional significance that we strongly ask you to support with advocacy and a financial commitment. These include the reactivation of the New York Route 347 reconstruction project, the rehabilitation and improvement of the Oakdale Merge on New York Route 27, the Meadowbrook Parkway and Southern State Parkway interchange improvements, the capacity expansion of the Sagtikos Parkway, and the extension of third lanes on the Northern State Parkway.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. Please let us know if we can provide any additional information.
