



Testimony of Ryan Forrestel
Co-Chair of the FAIR Committee of WNY
Presented to the Transportation Budget Hearing
January 30th, 2019

Finance Committee chairperson Kruger and Ways and Means Committee Chair, Weinstein, and all of the other members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Ryan Forrestel and I am a co-chair of the FAIR Committee of WNY. FAIR is an acronym for the Fair Apportionment of Infrastructure Revenue. We are a non-partisan advocacy organization whose primary goal is to assure that Western New York and more generally, Upstate New York, receives their fair share of the transportation funds distributed in New York State.

Additionally, we join the Associated General Contractors of America and other organizations in promoting the importance of adequate funding for our roads, bridges, and physical infrastructure.

I am also the principal of Cold Spring Construction, a highway and bridge construction company, that was founded by my great-grandfather 108 years ago. Being in business for over a century, my organization has had the privilege to complete numerous large- and small-scale projects across the great state of New York. It is in defense of some of those projects that I am here today. To speak on the current condition of our roads and bridges, and why we are desperate for funds to strengthen, update, and renew these structures that so many travelers have come to rely on daily.



It will come as no surprise to those that have read the news that America's transportation infrastructure is in desperate need of updating. Our roads, bridges, and tunnels are in critical state. And we must act now to prevent them from degrading further. A report published in November by TRIP, a national nonprofit transportation research group, estimates that rough, congested roads that lack updated Safety Features cost NYS drivers \$24.8 Billion dollars.

Individual motorists in the Buffalo-Niagara region alone, lose more than \$1,700 per year due to the condition of our roads, due to a higher vehicle operating cost, traffic crashes, as well as congestion-related delays.

1. The TRIP report goes on to say that in the Buffalo-Niagara Falls area, two-fifths or 40 percent of major locally and state-maintained roads are ranked in poor or mediocre condition.
2. Nine percent of locally and state-maintained bridges (measured 20 feet or longer) are rated in poor condition; additionally, fifteen percent of major locally and state-maintained roads in the Buffalo-Niagara Falls area are also rated in poor condition.
3. Another twenty-five percent are rated in mediocre condition, costing the average motorist an additional \$382 dollars each year in extra vehicle operating costs. These costs include accelerated vehicle depreciation, additional repair costs, increased fuel consumption, and tire wear.
4. TRIP estimates that driving on these rough roads costs the state's drivers a total of \$7 billion annually.



5. As the traffic congestion in the Buffalo-Niagara Falls area worsens, along with the conditions of its bridges and roads, motorists will average 40 hours of delay annually, at a cost of nearly \$1,000 per year in lost time and wasted fuel. State-wide, the cost to motorists is \$13 billion dollars in the form of lost time and wasted fuel due to congestion.

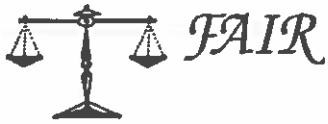
6. There are approximately 3.5 million full-time jobs located in NYS in key industries such as tourism, retail sales, agriculture, and manufacturing that are completely dependent on the state's transportation network.

7. \$1.3 trillion dollars in goods are shipped via New York, mostly by trucks that relying heavily on the state's vast network of roads and bridges. Increasingly, companies will take into account the quality of a region's transportation system before deciding where to re-locate or expand.

8. The efficiency and condition of New York's transportation system, particularly its highways, is critical to the health of the state's economy. Regions with congested or poorly maintained roads may see businesses relocate to areas with a smoother, more efficient and more modern transportation system.

9. Lastly, from 2014 to 2016, sixty-four people were killed in traffic crashes in the Buffalo-Niagara Falls area. And although it is impossible to associate a cost to the lost lives of those individuals, the TRIP report places a measurable impact of those crashes as \$4.8 billion dollars statewide.

10. Although New York's overall traffic fatality rate of 0.83 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel is lower than the national average of



1.18. New York's non-interstate rural roads fatality rate is approximately three and a half times higher than all other roads in the state.

Many of you are aware of the economic renaissance that the City of Buffalo has enjoyed. It has happened in no small part because of the leadership that you all have shown, in dedicating critical resources to our region. The vertical resurgence can be seen everywhere with construction cranes dotting our skyline. That said, while there have been dozens of new buildings built representing well over a billion dollars of investment, the horizontal investment in the form of public infrastructure (roads, bridges, sewers, etc.) have not kept pace. For instance, there has been over \$500 million invested in new buildings at the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus. It is an important part of the economic future of Buffalo. That said, the streets and sidewalks surrounding the BNMC are in deplorable condition. The main thoroughfares bringing employees, patients and visitors to the campus do not represent the quality of the built environment on the campus and we must change this equation immediately.

We acknowledge that these issues are not unique to New York State and that NYS alone cannot solve the problem. We applaud the President for talking about a national infrastructure program and are pleased that Speaker Pelosi has cited this as a priority for the House of Representatives. That said, it is time to act. We are hopeful that the federal government can at least agree on this one initiative and pass a robust program that does not require states to pick up more than their traditional share of the costs. But short of that, and there has been no indication that the Feds are capable of agreeing on much, it is incumbent upon the state to act and lead the nation as New York State has done so many times in the past. The time is now for the Senate, the Assembly and the Governor to show the rest of the



country how the executive branch and the legislative branch can lock arms and agree on an infrastructure master plan that dramatically improves our aging bridges and highways.

Adequate funding for the state's transportation system would allow for smoother and more durable roads and bridges, more efficient mobility, enhanced safety, economic growth opportunities, as well as an opportunity to upgrade in anticipation of the next generation of surface transportation. Adequately funding work on the state's infrastructure will also result in tens of thousands of jobs that pay a good salary. Leveraging the resources already present in the state, this would offer great value to all New York State residents. Thank you for your time today.

