



## MISSION

NYSCHSA is a non-profit organization that promotes the construction and maintenance of a safe and modern county roads system and other allied transportation infrastructure. It's an important mission with more than 20,400 miles of county highways and more than 9,000 local bridges in New York state.

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## KEY ISSUES

### **LOCAL ROAD AND BRIDGE FUNDING WAS CUT BY \$120 MILLION IN THE CURRENT 2020-21 BUDGET**

- The Governor reduced the 2020-21 CHIPS, PAVE-NY and Emergency Winter Recovery (EWR) Programs by \$120.6 million and has not yet released the \$100M for the BRIDGE-NY Program.
- After the Legislature adopted the 2020-21 budget there was a 69-day postponement before the State released each municipality's financial award letter, only guaranteeing 80% reimbursement: delaying millions of dollars in highway work and tens of thousands of construction workers from starting their jobs.
- CHIPS, EWR and PAVE-NY are reimbursement programs. This means that they are disrupted by state policies that threaten payment delays and create uncertainty about full or partial repayment. All municipalities suffered financial losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic and many would not contract for work until they were certain that the State would reimburse them.
- These critical local highway programs are fully bonded and reducing them saved the State little cash; less than 25% of the programs' total value (Example: a \$100 million cut in local highway funding only saves the State \$25 million in cash). Going forward these programs need to be kept at their budgeted levels because they provide critically needed economic stimulus to every community statewide. We must ensure that this unnecessary funding delay and financial reduction never happens again.

### **NYSCHSA & NYSAOTSOH 2021-22 BUDGET REQUESTS:**

- ✓ Support restoring the CHIPS program to \$438 million annually.
- ✓ Support increasing Extreme Winter Recovery funding to \$100 million annually.
- ✓ Support restoring the local BRIDGE-NY program to \$100 million annually.
- ✓ Support restoring the local PAVE-NY program to \$100 million annually.
- ✓ Support restoring the \$120.6 million cut from municipalities in 2020-21 and release the \$100 million local bridge program.

## **COVID-19 HAS IMPACTED LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCES MORE THAN THE STATE**

- State assistance and sales tax receipts represent nearly half of the revenues for County governments. Since January, local sales tax collections are down \$1.7 billion, and the state has reduced budgeted assistance to local governments by \$2.6 billion.
- Local highway budgets have been cut.
- Municipal highway workers were deemed essential and have been on the job since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Localities have been successfully implementing CDC safe construction guidelines and have been purchasing personal protective equipment for laborers.
- According to the State Comptroller, as of November 30, 2020 the State General Fund had a balance of \$13.6 billion; \$7 billion more than the same time a year ago.
- The latest Federal Stimulus Act provides roughly \$54 billion to New York, \$426 million of which is for critical aid to the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) to backstop declining revenues and support construction jobs. A portion of this state budget relief should go to local governments that maintain 87% of the State's roads and half the bridges to restore local program cuts and enhance funding where possible.

## **A Multi-Year NYSDOT Capital Program is Important; a new program must be adopted by April 1**

Last year's Enacted Budget included a one-year NYSDOT capital program that is ending March 31<sup>st</sup>. The 2020-21 Executive Budget had originally proposed a two-year program. A multi-year capital program is important for planning maintenance and enhancements of our valuable state and local transportation infrastructure. The current capital program provides no increases in funding levels from the year prior for the CHIPS, Marchiselli, EWR, PAVE-NY and BRIDGE-NY programs.

## **NYS INFRASTRUCTURE IS LOCAL INFRASTRUCTURE**

Local roads and bridges account for eighty-seven percent (87%) of NYS roads, and more than half of its bridges.

Thirty-four percent (34%) of local bridges are deficient and forty eight percent (48%) of road pavements are rated fair or poor. Drivers on local roads contribute nearly half of the gas taxes collected in this state.

According to a study conducted for the NYS Association of Town Superintendents of Highways an additional \$1.7 billion in additional annual spending is needed to address local pavement and bridge conditions of this local system, excluding of New York City.

## **CHIPS UNDERFUNDED IN THE EXECUTIVE BUDGET**

The last time that the CHIPS base level was increased was in 2013 when the Legislature added \$75 million. CHIPS is the financial lifeblood of all local highway departments, distributing vital and reoccurring state funding through a formula to every local government in the State.

The CHIPS funding level for 2021-22 is critical as demonstrated by our previous requests over the years for a \$150 million increase in the CHIPS base amount. Every local highway department relies heavily on this flexible funding source. The 20% cut during this past construction season had a detrimental impact on already stressed paving programs and road maintenance efforts. Counties and towns are struggling to meet operating costs and capital needs due to the crushing effects of the pandemic on revenues and state assistance. These constraints and setbacks to local transportation infrastructure planning and programming will make it that much more difficult to meet system demands without elevated levels of funding for CHIPS and other highway and bridge programs in 2021 and beyond.

## **JOB, ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF INCREASES IN LOCAL TRANSPORTATION FUNDING**

CHIPS, PAVE-NY and EWR funding is distributed to every municipality; and BRIDGE-NY project awards are distributed equitably throughout the state.

Each \$150 million increase in funding for local roads, bridges and culverts results in up to 4,200 highway construction-related jobs.

Efficient transportation systems provide economic and social benefits that result in better accessibility to markets, employment and increase private sector investments.

## **EXTREME WINTER RECOVERY**

The winter season is extraordinarily challenging for local highway departments in terms of high wind events and the amount of freeze/thaw cycles.

Overtime hours for snow/debris removal and the resulting labor costs strains operating budgets and, due to extreme events, equipment breakdowns and malfunctions are more frequent.

Local highway departments plow not only the huge local road system, but also over a quarter of the NYSDOT roads.

The freezing and thawing conditions lead to severe damage from flooding and will certainly create more potholes in roads that will need to be repaired in the spring.

### **PAVE-NY**

PAVE-NY funds much needed road paving-related projects for local governments by formula. The inability to stabilize pavement conditions in our state is a huge concern for the future viability of the economy. Funding shortages mean many local governments' preventive pavement preservation strategies—to apply well-timed and targeted maintenance treatments—fall short of what is necessary to avoid more costly major rehabilitation or reconstruction down the road. PAVE-NY must continue to be fully funded annually.

### **BRIDGE-NY**

BRIDGE-NY is a signature program to direct federal and state funding to local bridge and culvert projects throughout the state. In both Round I and Round II of BRIDGE-NY, the number and value of project applications far exceeded funding available for each region of the state. The chart clearly indicates this gap between needs and availability of BRIDGE-NY funding. **The need for the continuation and timely release of BRIDGE-NY funding is clearly necessary.**

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Amount \$ Available</b>              | <b>Applications</b>                    | <b>Funded</b>           |
|-------------|---|--|-------------------------|
| 2016        | \$200M<br>(\$20M dedicated to culverts) | Round I:<br>229 bridges, 366 culverts  | 93 bridges, 39 culverts |
| 2018        | \$262M<br>(\$50M dedicated to culverts) | Round II:<br>259 bridges, 514 culverts | 86 bridges, 79 culverts |

### **NYSCHSA & NYSAOTSOH SUPPORT**

- Amendments to the General Municipal Law extending the expiration of cooperative purchasing (“piggy-backing”) beyond July 2021. This would continue to provide local government’s greater contract flexibility and cost savings by permitting certain shared purchasing among political subdivisions.
- Amendments to the Highway Law to increase the Consolidated Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS) competitively bid threshold from \$350,000 to \$500,000. Increasing the CHIPS bidding threshold will give municipalities more flexibility to pursue the most cost-effective option to bid out or perform in-house projects, reducing costs to taxpayers.
- Provisions to improve safety in active work zones.
- Legislation allowing municipalities engaged in snow and ice removal or maintenance the option to install green lights or alternating green and amber lights on their vehicles in order to increase visibility.



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**NEW YORK STATE COUNTY HIGHWAY SUPERINTENDENTS ASSOCIATION  
JOINT LEGISLATIVE PUBLIC HEARINGS ON THE  
2021-2022 EXECUTIVE BUDGET PROPOSAL – TRANSPORTATION**

**OPENING**

Good evening, Chairs Kreuger and Weinstein, and members of the Senate and Assembly. I am Joseph Wisinski, President of the New York State County Highway Superintendents Association (NYSCHSA) and Madison County Highway Superintendent. Thank you for this opportunity to offer comments today on the 2021-2022 Executive Budget and its impact on counties' local road and bridge programs.

**COVID-19**

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected everyone, and our county highway departments are no exception. We adhere to and follow all current public health policies to minimize the spread. However, despite our best efforts we continue to be short staffed with people out for positive cases or quarantine. Costs for cleaning and sanitizing of vehicles and equipment, social distancing, and masks, all continue to strain our local budgets, as our dedicated staff goes about the business of reconstructing, repairing, and maintaining our local transportation systems. In addition, we request that our Highway Crews be added to the Phase 1B COVID eligibility list.

**LOCAL ROADS AND BRIDGES**

- As you know, make up the bulk of the statewide system
- 87% of NY's roads and over half the bridges are owned by local governments
- Our crews are plowing county roads as well as many state-owned highways to assure safe winter travel
- Local Roads are Essential: The reason is Motorists need to get to and from their jobs, homes, schools, hospitals, and other destinations.

## **THE 21-22**

- The Executive Budget proposal holds CHIPS funding once again, flat, at \$438 million.
- If enacted, this would be the 9th year without a CHIPS increase
- No increases are proposed for BRIDGE-NY and PAVE-NY (both remain at \$100 million)
- We do applaud the Governor's announcement yesterday to rollout a new \$200 million BRIDGE-NY project solicitation to generate good-paying jobs, improve system functionality and resiliency, and keeping millions of motorists safe
- The Extreme Winter Recovery program, which the Legislature sponsors at \$65 million, is not carried forward in the Executive Budget

Thus, the state's local road and bridge spending plan is flat despite the 33% funding increase in the overall 2-Year DOT Capital Plan, set at \$3 billion for the current budget plus the one to be adopted in April.

### **LOCAL PROGRAMS NEED TO BE MADE WHOLE without delay.**

- The current appropriations for local highway programs were cut by 20%; \$120.6 million
- 2020 Funding allocation notices to local highway departments were not sent until 69 days after the budget was adopted last April.
- Many municipalities could not go forward and plan their highway programs with the uncertainty of full reimbursement from the state
- With only 80% of our CHIPS, PAVE NY and EWR funds available, our local transportation capital programs, which were already underfunded, were reduced even further.
- As a result, we saw a reduction in local construction jobs and we all know that work delayed, will cost much more later.
- Counties have seen a massive drop in sales tax collections and state aid and while Counties do all they can to maintain highway infrastructure funding at the local level, they are often operating with their hands tied behind their backs, and not able to makeup losses in highway funding.

## **SOME IMPORTANT QUESTIONS THAT REMAIN UNANSWERED ARE**

- The Governor's Executive Budget proposes a 15% repayment for local programs that were cut; 5% will be a permanent cut for unknown reasons.
- It is not clear how or when the local road and bridge capital repayment funding will happen.
- We need Legislators to help us answers to these questions

## **NYSCHSA IS URGING LEGISLATIVE SUPPORT FOR:**

- 100% of the cuts to highway funding, to be restored this year.
- Fully funding the 2021-2022 appropriations as proposed in the Executive Budget
- Increase the EWR appropriation to \$100 million
- And Protection against cuts to the local highway programs in the 2021-2022 state budget

## **THANK YOU!**

We look forward to working with you as budget deliberations continue and to assure appropriate levels of funding for essential local road, bridge, and culvert projects, and assist in the economic recovery and job creation that public infrastructure investment brings to NY communities.