



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michelle Hinchey

Hinchey, Skoufis, Rolison Urge DOT Action on Hudson Valley Bridge Safety

MICHELLE HINCHEY April 2, 2025

Rip Van Winkle Bridge and Newburgh-Beacon Bridge Flagged by National Transportation Safety Board as Potentially Vulnerable to Ship Strikes

HUDSON VALLEY, NY – Today, Senators Michelle Hinchey, James Skoufis, and Rob Rolison sent a letter to New York State Department of Transportation (DOT) Commissioner Marie Therese Dominguez, expressing concerns regarding **recent findings** by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) on the potential structural vulnerability of the Rip Van Winkle Bridge and Newburgh-Beacon Bridge, which spans Hudson to Catskill. These findings come as part of the NTSB's investigation into last year's collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore, which crumbled after a cargo ship struck one of its support piers. NTSB's investigation revealed that Maryland officials failed to assess the bridge's vulnerability—an evaluation that would have shown the bridge's risk of collapse was nearly 30 times above the acceptable limit. This oversight has raised alarms about other bridges nationwide, which also lack such assessments, including the Rip Van Winkle and Newburgh-Beacon Bridges.

In their letter, the lawmakers posed specific questions to Commissioner Dominguez regarding the DOT's stance on the NTSB's findings, timelines for addressing possible structural vulnerabilities, safety assessment protocols, prioritization of protection projects,

and the availability of state funding for repairs.

Senator Michelle Hinchey said, “Thousands of Hudson Valley residents and visitors rely on the Rip Van Winkle and Newburgh-Beacon Bridges every day—we can’t wait for a disaster to test their safety. The tragic implosion of Baltimore’s Key Bridge was a wake-up call, proving why proactive inspections and reinforcements are essential. We need to know what’s being done to evaluate any possible threats so we can ensure the security of everyone who crosses these vital links to our communities.”

Senator James Skoufis said, “It’s been just over a year since the collapse of the Key Bridge in Baltimore. Six overnight workers were tragically killed, and we must take every action possible to prevent another tragedy from occurring. The two bridges flagged by the National Transportation Safety Board located in the Hudson Valley are vital arteries for the region. Ensuring they remain usable, accessible, and—most of all—safe, is of utmost importance.”

Senator Rob Rolison said, “Our bridges are lifelines for communities and commerce. The NTSB’s findings make clear that we can’t wait for a crisis to act. We urge the DOT to move swiftly in assessing and securing the Newburgh-Beacon and Rip Van Winkle Bridges to protect the thousands who rely on them every day.”

The full text of the letter to DOT Commissioner Marie Therese Dominguez can be found below:

April 2, 2025

Marie Therese Dominguez, Commissioner
New York State Department of Transportation
50 Wolf Road

Albany, NY 12232

Dear Commissioner Dominguez,

You are no doubt familiar with the recent National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) **report** that raised significant concerns about the structural vulnerability of bridges in case of a vessel collision. The report was troubling, and we would like to learn more about how the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) views it.

About a dozen of the 68 bridges flagged by the NTSB are in New York State, and two are located in the Hudson Valley: the Newburgh-Beacon Bridge and the Rip Van Winkle Bridge. Both bridges serve as important transit links for residents and businesses, underscoring the importance of addressing any potential problems.

With this in mind, we are hoping you can address the following questions:

- Does NYSDOT agree with the report's findings?
- What is your timeline to address the structural vulnerabilities of these two bridges?
- What steps is NYSDOT taking to ensure overall bridge safety?
- What reviews has NYSDOT conducted and for which bridges?
- How are you assessing vulnerability?
- What protection projects are being prioritized?
- Is there state funding available for bridge repairs? If so, are there repair plans already underway?

We know you share our concern that infrastructure used daily by our constituents appears

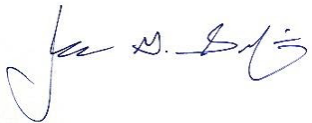
vulnerable. We are respectfully requesting a full and timely update on NYSDOT's activities in response to the safety concerns raised by the NTSB. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michelle Hinchey". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Michelle Hinchey

New York State Senate, District 41

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "James Skoufis". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

James Skoufis

New York State Senate, District 42

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rob Rolison". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Rob Rolison

New York State Senate, District 39

###