



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Charles J. Fuschillo Jr.

## Fuschillo and LICA: Paterson needs to release LI Transportation Stimulus Funds

CHARLES J. FUSCHILLO JR. March 22, 2009

State Senator Charles J. Fuschillo, Jr. (8th Senate District) today stood with Marc Herbst, Executive Director of the Long Island Contractors Association (LICA), and LICA members to call on Governor Paterson to stop delaying the allocation of federal stimulus money for Long Island's shovel ready transportation projects. Workers who joined Senator Fuschillo and Mr. Herbst filled in a single pothole along the Meadowbrook Parkway to symbolize the small amount of funding for which Long Island is being considered.

"The State has the funding, the projects are there, and the workers are ready to do the job, but the transportation stimulus funds haven't helped Long Island at all because Governor Paterson is sitting on the money. These funds would go a long way in these difficult times, when over 102,000 Long Islanders are unemployed and the local economy is struggling. Governor Paterson needs to exercise leadership and allocate these funds so that people can get back to work," said Senator Fuschillo, the Ranking Republican Member of the Senate's Transportation Committee.

"There is a growing unease that Albany incorrectly views Long Island as some vast money vault, where taxes and state revenue can be easily retrieved from wealthy Long Islanders and redirected to any other part of New York. Not only is that untrue but the depth of

economic pain among the working middle class is real and running at fever pitch. The road to Long Island's economy recovery begins here by putting our construction crews back to work on the region's infrastructure but that can happen only if the dollars allocated for that job are released by the Governor's office and directed to serve 2.7 million people," said Mr. Herbst.

Although Long Island accounts for 23% percent of the state's highway use, Governor Paterson has only allocated \$154 million for the Long Island Region according to NYSDOT officials. As of March 2, New York State had 120 days under federal regulations to spend half of the \$1.1 billion it received in federal transportation stimulus funds for highways and bridges.

Senator Fuschillo and Mr. Herbst noted that shortchanging Long Island's infrastructure seems to be a common theme in Albany. Only \$75 million of the \$225 million targeted for Long Island in the state's 2008-09 Capital Plan has been expended. In addition, Long Island only received \$47 million of the \$35.8 billion transportation bond funding approved by voters in 2005.

Governor Paterson recently shocked LICA and many hardworking Long Islanders when he was quoted as saying "we don't have time to be fiddling over where the projects go" and suggested that Long Island workers could leave their families to seek work on stimulus projects in upstate New York. The Governor made the remarks at a recent meeting in Rochester while addressing the regional imbalance in the distribution of transportation stimulus funds thus far.

"Statements like that show a lack of leadership. Every region of the state is in need of these funds to help create jobs and improve their infrastructure. Governor Paterson should not be

so dismissive of our area when it accounts for almost one quarter of the state's highway use," Senator Fuschillo said.

"I can tell the Governor that it insults my members to suggest that they travel hundreds of miles away from their families and homes when there is work ready for them right here at home," Mr. Herbst added.

In addition, Senator Fuschillo and Mr. Herbst further questioned Governor Paterson's leadership and decision to authorize his Transportation Commissioner, a key person in charge of overseeing this stimulus funding, to take a three week vacation in Borneo at a time when jobs are desperately needed and the state is facing a \$14 billion deficit.

"Any skilled executive would never have approved such an extended vacation for a key person on his team at a time when so much is at stake," Senator Fuschillo added.