



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

Kennedy Presses Department of Transportation for Answers

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY February 28, 2011

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Senator fights for increased transportation aid for Western New York

ALBANY, N.Y. – At the joint legislative budget hearing held Monday to discuss transportation and infrastructure, Senator Timothy M. Kennedy, D-58th District, pressed officials from the Department of Transportation for answers on issues critical to the economic future of Western New York.

When it was his turn to question the DOT, Senator Kennedy pushed to get Western New York its fair share of transportation aid to revitalize the region's aging infrastructure.

"Over the last few years, Western New York has suffered from a disparity in the level of the state transportation funding that we have received. Quite frankly, we haven't gotten our fair share. Historically, because Western New York is home to about 11-12 percent of our state's roads and bridges, we have received about 10 percent of overall state transportation aid," Senator Kennedy said. "However, during the process of devising aid formulas for fiscal year 2008-2009, there was a human error in calculation – or that's what we were told – that brought the aid number all the way down to 4.4 percent. That disparity was eventually corrected but only partially. In the time that has passed since the human error, Western New York lost approximately \$167 million that would have provided a welcome economic boost and improved road and bridge safety."

The error was the result of a miscalculation in the lane-miles and condition of bridges in Western New York. Because a year's worth of state allocations and federal stimulus money were awarded based on the miscalculated formula and because the corrected formula did not return the region's aid to historic levels, Western New York lost out on about \$167 million.

With Western New York's portion of transportation aid currently standing at only eight percent, Senator Kennedy pressed to learn what the DOT plans to do to rectify the aid disparity and to help restore lost funding.

"The lower (funding level) number that you had mentioned was based on an error in the calculations. We corrected that. We will look at new information as we update the allocation, but it's going to be based on bridge and pavement conditions throughout the state," said Stanley Gee, deputy executive commissioner of DOT, in response to Kennedy's questioning. "Our infrastructure is aging. We're not replacing or rehabilitating at the pace that we would

like, so I suspect the deterioration will continue and will be reflected in the formulas throughout the state. I can't give you a specific answer until we run those numbers."

Following the conclusion of the budget hearing, Senator Kennedy sent a letter to Joan McDonald, the acting commissioner of the Department of Transportation, reiterating his appeal for Western New York to receive its fair share of infrastructure funding.

"Mr. Gee confirmed that later this year the Department of Transportation will once again be recalculating their formulas for regional allocations," Senator Kennedy wrote. "I respectfully request that when these formulas are recalculated, you take into account not only Western New York's historic level of funding (10 percent), and our share of state lane-miles and bridges (12 percent and 11.7 percent, respectively), but that you also factor in the \$167 million dollar shortfall that occurred from the previous error."

[Click here to watch Senator Kennedy question DOT Deputy Executive Commissioner Stanley Gee.](#)