



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

Senator Kennedy Presses for Answers on \$200M Thruway Funding Shortfall to Western New York

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY January 9, 2012

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Thomas Madison confirmed as new executive director of the Thruway Authority.

Senator Kennedy raises questions of regional funding equity during confirmation hearing.

ALBANY, N.Y. – Senator Timothy M. Kennedy, D-58th District, pressed Thomas Madison, the new executive director of the New York State Thruway Authority, for more information regarding a \$200 million Thruway funding shortfall to Western New York during his confirmation hearing before the Senate Transportation Committee.

When the Thruway Authority proposed their 2005-2011 Capital Plan, the Authority outlined their intentions to spend \$593 million in Western New York over the course of those years. The Thruway asked for a toll increase to pay for the Capital Plan, and Western New Yorkers were willing to accept the toll increase with the expectation that our region would undergo significant road reconstruction. In reality, the Thruway Authority only spent \$390 million in Western New York – which represents a funding shortfall of \$200 million.

“Western New Yorkers are stuck paying more, but getting less. We held up our end of the bargain and paid the toll increase, but the Thruway has failed to hold up theirs,” said Senator

Kennedy. “The Thruway Authority spent \$200 million less in our region than they said they would. The consequences have been significant – Western New York has missed out on thousands of construction jobs and lost hundreds of millions of dollars in economic activity.”

In the 2005-2011 Capital Plan, it was also proposed that the New York City division of the Thruway receive \$684 million, but the actual funding allocated to the downstate division amounted to \$783.5 million – an increase of about \$100 million from the original proposal.

That means at the close of 2011, Western New York had received \$200 million less than what had been proposed in the Capital Plan, while New York City saw funding in their region increase \$100 million.

“It’s a question of fairness,” Senator Kennedy added. “Western New York was slated to receive \$593 million. Instead, we got far less than what was originally proposed, while New York City received far more than what they expected. Our region deserves equity.”

The Thruway Authority’s \$200 million funding shortfall to Western New York is compounded by the fact that the Department of Transportation shortchanged the region to the tune of \$167 million when they made a mistake in their funding calculations a few years ago.

“In total, Western New York has suffered a loss of about \$367 million in transportation investment over the last few years. This has had a tremendous negative impact on our economy, our roads and our quality of life,” Senator Kennedy said.

During his confirmation hearing, Madison spoke about the importance of equity in future Thruway investment. He also discussed the necessity of ensuring each region of the statewide system has funding to meet their needs. The Senate approved the nomination of Madison to serve as executive director of the State Thruway Authority.

This funding disparity happened under a previous administration, Senator Kennedy noted, adding that he looks forward to working with the current administration and the new leadership of the Thruway Authority to ensure regional equity.

Senator Kennedy addressed the funding disparity on the floor of the Senate during the vote confirming Madison. Video is available here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WQzRQFpRIqU>.

The senator also raised these regional concerns during Madison's confirmation hearing before the Transportation Committee. Video available here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rLSnVCChSNo>.

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Senator Timothy M. Kennedy represents the New York State Senate's 58th District, which is comprised of the towns of Cheektowaga, Eden, Hamburg and West Seneca, the city of Lackawanna and parts of the city of Buffalo. More information is available at kennedy.nysenate.gov.