



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

## Senator Kennedy Urges Regional Economic Development Council to Make Skyway Removal a Top Priority for WNY

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY May 9, 2013

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*Empire State Development President & CEO Ken Adams says state wants advice from the WNY Regional Economic Development Council on Skyway removal.*

*In urging the Regional Council to support the effort, Kennedy calls Skyway removal a transformative infrastructure project that will boost the economy, similar to Robert Moses Parkway removal.*

*Kennedy: Razing the 'structurally deficient' and 'functionally obsolete' Skyway will remove a physical barrier that is obstructing future development along Buffalo's waterfront.*

BUFFALO, N.Y. – Senator Tim Kennedy, D-Buffero, has urged the Western New York Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) to make the removal of the Buffalo Skyway a top priority for the region. Kennedy believes tearing down the Skyway will spur further development along Buffalo's waterfront and lead to new opportunities for Western New Yorkers to take advantage of their waterfront by boosting public access and private investment.

"The removal of the Buffalo Skyway will prove to be a transformative project that will open up new opportunities for development along our waterfront," Kennedy said. "Razing this 'structurally deficient' and 'functionally obsolete' structure will remove a physical barrier that is impeding continued economic progress at Buffalo's waterfront, and it will spur private-sector investment and job creation.

"I urge the Regional Economic Development Council," Kennedy added, "to make removal of the Skyway a top priority infrastructure project for the Western New York region."

This week, Empire State Development President & CEO Ken Adams appeared before the Senate Economic Development Committee – of which Kennedy is the ranking Democratic member – to discuss statewide job creation initiatives. When Kennedy brought up Skyway removal and its potential impact on local economic development, Adams said ESD intended to follow the lead of the WNY Regional Economic Development Council. The regional council's opinion on the matter, Adams indicated, would help steer any state actions.

While questioning Adams, Kennedy drew comparisons between the Buffalo Skyway and the Robert Moses Parkway.

Lt. Governor Robert Duffy was in Buffalo Tuesday to announce state plans to invest in efforts to remove parts of the Robert Moses Parkway. Kennedy seized the opportunity to

urge the state to start moving on removal of the Skyway – a similar and significant transformative infrastructure project that would boost development and job growth along Buffalo's waterfront.

Kennedy has written a letter to the co-chairs of the WNY Regional Economic Development Council, encouraging them to support the ongoing efforts to take down the Skyway.

The NYS Department of Transportation (DOT) has previously given the Skyway a safety rating of 4.85, meaning that it is “structurally deficient.” A 2012 DOT report on state bridge conditions notes that the Federal Highway Administration rates the bridge as “functionally obsolete.”

Kennedy says tearing down the Skyway will not only open up new waterfront lands for private development, but it will also save taxpayer money. A 2008 DOT report shows that current maintenance of the structure will cost the state approximately \$117 million over the next 20 years, while removal costs have been estimated at \$20 to \$25 million.

Kennedy wants the DOT to finally make this long-awaited investment in Buffalo's waterfront, and he believes the WNY REDC's endorsement will help move the state closer to action on Skyway removal. Kennedy says the funding source for this project should come through the state DOT, which oversees the Skyway.

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*Click here to read Senator Kennedy's letter to the Regional Economic Development Council.*

*Senator Timothy M. Kennedy represents the New York State Senate's 63rd District, which is comprised of the town of Cheektowaga, the city of Lackawanna and nearly all of the city of Buffalo. More information is available at <http://kennedy.nysenate.gov>.*