



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Griffo: State Must Stop Raiding Highway & Bridge Fund

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO February 5, 2014

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UTICA – Sen. Joseph A. Griffo today reiterated his objection to the state’s sweep of highway and bridge funds, following a state comptroller’s report that revealed just 22 percent of motorist taxes and fees are being used for capital construction project.

“Motorists paid \$3.8 billion last year in state taxes and fees on travel-related items such as gas, vehicle licensing and rental cars. That money is supposed to go toward making bridges and highways safer,” said Griffo, R-Rome. “Instead, the money is being taken to pay for past borrowing as well as operating costs of state agencies – at the expense of our infrastructure.”

The comptroller's report, released today said four out of every \$10 dollars the fund received last year was siphoned off to pay for recurring costs, such as snow and ice removal by state Department of Transportation employees and Department of Motor Vehicles staff.

Comptroller DiNapoli also found that, since the fund was created in 1991, it has used just 30.6 percent – or about \$14.5 billion – on actual capital improvement projects.

“We need legislation that will protect taxpayers' money and make sure it goes where it should,” said Sen. Griffo. “That's why I've supported legislation that phases out the sweeps from the highway and bridge fund and prohibits it from being robbed again in the future.”

The Bridge and Road Investment and Dedicated Fund Guaranteed Enforcement (BRIDGE) Reform Act, which has passed the Senate twice previously, would ensure that the funds collected through motorist taxes and fees would be spent on rebuilding, replacing and reconditioning highways and bridges, with a focus on safety improvements.

Twelve percent of highway bridges in New York are classified as structurally deficient, while an additional 27 percent are classified as functionally obsolete. While those classifications don't mean the bridges are unsafe for motorists, they spotlight bridges in need of maintenance, repair, rehab or replacement.