



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

SAFE STREETS: MAKING IT EASIER FOR VISITORS TO ENJOY OUR REGION

PATTY RITCHIE August 23, 2011

The next time the state looks at rebuilding a road in Central or Northern New York, planners will have to consider whether it makes sense to widen it to allow for a bike path, a pedestrian walk way or even sidewalks.

With many of our roads in Oswego, Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties originally designed at the turn of the century when carriages, wagons and stage coaches were the primary means of transportation, all of us have worried how hikers and bicyclists manage to safely travel some of our narrower byways.

That's why I supported a new law that the governor signed last week called the "Complete Streets"

bill (S 5411) that requires transportation planners to consider the needs of pedestrians and bicyclists when they design new roads or rebuild old ones.

With our region's growing tourism economy, it's important that we make it safer for those who decide to explore the treasures our region's rural areas have to offer.

Across Central and Northern New York, visitors to our rural areas can find farm stands, wineries, bed and breakfasts and a growing variety of agricultural based tourist destinations, alongside our scenic wonders, awe inspiring lakes, streams and rivers.

To help our region create more jobs, we need to make smart investments in our rural transportation system to make it easier for visitors to enjoy what we have to offer.

Our small towns and villages, off the main highways, need more visitors to support their stores, restaurants and vacation destinations. Under the new law, state, local and county agencies will have to consider measures like pedestrian walkways, bike lanes and sidewalks when drawing up a street project that is receiving state or federal money.

The American Association for Retired People (AARP) made the "Complete Streets" bill this year's top priority in the legislature to create more opportunities for people of all ages to enjoy what New York's outdoors has to offer.

As your state senator, my first priority will always be to fight for our communities to help get them the resources they need to invest in our transportation infrastructure system. But as we review projects, our communities will now also be looking at ways we can open our region to welcome more people so they can have the opportunity to enjoy the unique resources that we have to offer.