



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michael H. Ranzenhofer

Upstate Deserves Its Fair Share For Infrastructure Improvements

MICHAEL H. RANZENHOFER November 18, 2015

| ISSUE: **TRANSPORTATION**

Look for...

Senator Mike Ranzenhofer's
Monthly Column

...In your local newspaper
the third week of every month

Senator Ranzenhofer's column appeared in the Amherst and Clarence Bees on November 18th. Upstate New York's crumbling roads and bridges have been put on the back burner for far too long.

According to TRIP, a nonprofit organization with a focus on transportation issues, nine percent of bridges in Western New York are "structurally deficient," while 27 percent are considered "functionally obsolete." Even worse, more than one-third of roads are considered either "poor" or "mediocre."

The American Society of Civil Engineers gives New York's 17,456 bridges a grade of D+. The organization also rates the Empire State's 240,000 miles of roads with an even lower grade, D-.

Earlier this year, I pushed for a record level of state investment for local highway, road and bridge repair projects. The 2015-16 State Budget allocated more than \$500 million as part of the Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program and Extreme Winter Recovery.

Even with funding levels hitting new highs, it's still not enough.

More recently, Governor Andrew Cuomo and New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio agreed to designate \$8.3 billion in state investment for downstate's Metropolitan Transportation Authority. That is why I am calling for New York State to invest \$8.3 billion to address Upstate's serious transportation issues. Upstate deserves its fair share, too.

If downstate residents stand to benefit from billions of dollars for the MTA, then so too should residents in other parts of the State. Upstate residents deserve parity of transportation infrastructure investments. It is a matter of regional balance and fairness.

The roads and bridges all across Upstate New York should be made a priority throughout budget talks next year. Governor Cuomo, as well as my colleagues in the Senate and Assembly, should demonstrate that same level of commitment to funding for Upstate transportation as the MTA.

The State could potentially save money over the long term by taking action now. Generally, repair costs start to skyrocket as roads and bridges deteriorate from good to poor so it is financially prudent to make a major investment sooner, rather than later.

Committing more funding to these critical projects has many positive economic benefits. A major investment has the potential to create thousands of jobs. A stronger infrastructure will help to strengthen the blood vessels of our Western New York economy by helping local companies and small businesses move goods and services.

Fixing our infrastructure will save motorists hundreds of dollars per year in costly repairs to their vehicles. The state of infrastructure is a public safety issue, and improving roads and bridges will keep motorists, as well as their passengers, safe.

As your State Senator, improving our roads and bridges is one of my top priorities.