



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

## **Longtime Cattaraugus County Legislative Chairman Gerard “Jess” Fitzpatrick (1928 - 2006) Honored for Dedication to Development of U.S. Route 219**

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Ellicottville, New York – The contributions of Gerard “Jess” Fitzpatrick, the longtime Chairman of the Cattaraugus County Legislature, were honored at a ceremony to dedicate the dual span bridges that carry U.S. Route 219 over the Cattaraugus Creek in his name.

Senator Catharine Young (R,C,I-57th S.D.) and Assemblyman Joseph Giglio (R,C,I-148th A.D.), the sponsors of the measure, were joined by friends, family and colleagues of the long-serving county legislator whose determined advocacy for the development of U.S. Route 219 spanned decades and helped spur progress on the project. As the legislator for the 5th District, the roadway crossed through or nearby the towns he represented including Ashford, Ellicottville, and Franklinville, making it a focal point for his economic development efforts.

“Jess Fitzpatrick was a visionary who, decades ago, saw the transformative potential of developing U.S. Route 219 into a major north-south expressway between Toronto and Miami,” said Senator Young. “He knew that in order for Western New York to survive and thrive economically, we needed a transportation link to other markets that would facilitate trade and spur new regional economic investment. He built a network of support that included elected officials, business leaders, developers and citizens. It was a long, difficult process, but he never gave up, always believing that it was essential to our future.”

"Thanks to his perseverance, major progress towards upgrading U.S. Route 219 has been made. In November of 2010, we opened the Section 5 expressway and high-level bridge that spans Cattaraugus Creek in the Town of Ashford, one of the towns Jess represented. With 4.2 miles of four-lane divided highway and nine new bridges, including the two, twin steel arch bridges, this achievement was a huge step forward for the project. While, sadly, Jess passed away in 2006 and did not have an opportunity to see the culmination of his efforts, naming the twin bridges that carry U.S. Route 219 into Cattaraugus County will ensure his legacy is remembered while sustaining the momentum and focus we need to keep moving the project forward," added Senator Young.

"I was pleased to introduce legislation to commemorate and memorialize the efforts of the late Gerald "Jess" Fitzpatrick to improve the U.S. Route 219 corridor. As a County Legislator, Jess worked tirelessly to upgrade the roadway and to bring economic benefits to Cattaraugus County and its citizens. This is a fitting honor in his memory," said Assemblyman Joseph M. Giglio.

New York State Department of Transportation Acting Commissioner Cathy Calhoun said: With this dedication, we are paying tribute to the tireless work of Mr. Fitzpatrick, whose efforts led to an upgrade of the U.S. Route 219 corridor to a four-lane expressway. This expansion and the improvements made on this important corridor helped bring increased economic activity to the region. With today's dedication at the twin arch bridges, we are ensuring that Mr. Fitzpatrick and his legacy will always be remembered."

Dennis Eshbaugh, Past President of Route 219 Association and President of Holiday Valley, said: "We are thankful for the vision and persistence of our county leader, neighbor and friend Jess Fitzpatrick. The Route 219 Association and Continental One continue toward the goal of making 219 a viable business and traveler route extending from the Canadian border to Florida. The Jess Fitzpatrick Memorial Bridge is a key step in creating the momentum we need to keep that project going. Improved access to Ellicottville and the entire region is critically important to a successful future!"

"Our family is honored to be a part of this dedication to our father and appreciate the efforts of Senator Young and Assemblyman Giglio to make this a reality. It is a great tribute that the bridge coming into his beloved Cattaraugus County will bear his name," Sue Drago, daughter of Jess Fitzpatrick.

A related component of the project was completed in May of 2017, with the opening of a new \$17 million bridge over the Cattaraugus Creek, to replace the old Route 219 bridge that once stood in its place. The South Cascade Drive - Miller Road Bridge will serve as a connector route, significantly improving access for motorists and commercial traffic between the Village of Springville and the towns north and south of the bridge.

In July 2016, it was announced that Senator Young secured a commitment from the New York State Department of Transportation to commence the environmental study necessary to restart work on U.S. Route 219. The Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for Route 219 was included in the state's five-year transportation capital plan. DOT is currently developing the study's scope of work in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)