



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara calls for fairness in funding for Upstate, local roads and bridges: At first legislative budget hearing, O'Mara stresses need for stronger state commitment to local roads and bridges

THOMAS F. O'MARA January 26, 2021

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Governor Cuomo's proposed budget fails to recognize the importance of CHIPS funding to our counties, towns and villages as a vehicle for community strength, growth and jobs for local economies, and to help lessen the burden on local property taxpayers.

Albany, N.Y., January 26—State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats), newly appointed Ranking Member on the Senate Finance Committee, today highlighted the need for a

stronger state commitment to local roads and bridges across the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions, and throughout the Upstate New York region.

O'Mara made his comments at the opening of a series of legislative hearings on Governor Andrew Cuomo's proposed 2021-2022 New York State budget. Over the next several weeks, the Legislature's fiscal committees -- the Senate Finance Committee, and the Assembly Ways and Means Committee -- will hold 13 virtual hearings examining Cuomo's proposals in key issue areas.

Today's hearing focused on transportation. O'Mara, a longtime advocate for stronger state support for local transportation infrastructure, noted that the governor's proposed budget calls for spending more than \$50 billion as part of a five-year capital plan for the downstate Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) and other downstate transportation projects, while less than \$12 billion over two years is directed for road and bridge projects throughout the rest of the state.

Additionally, O'Mara said, funding for the main source of state aid for local roads and bridges, the Consolidated Highways and Local Streets Improvement Program (CHIPS), is essentially cut by \$65 million through the elimination of Extreme Winter Recovery funding.

At today's hearing, O'Mara questioned and made his concerns over upstate-downstate funding parity known directly to state Department of Transportation (DOT) Commissioner Marie Therese Dominguez.

O'Mara said, "The CHIPS program represents the most equitable and fair source of across-the-board state funding for local roads and bridges. Governor Cuomo's proposed budget fails to recognize its importance to our counties, towns and villages as a vehicle for community strength, growth and jobs for local economies, and to help lessen the burden on local

property taxpayers. In fact, it's hard to fathom how the governor can justify cutting this funding given the hardship that localities continue to shoulder as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and response. The restoration and strengthening of state support for local, upstate and rural roads, bridges and culverts must be a stronger priority in this budget."

O'Mara was named the top Republican on the Finance Committee in late December by Senate Republican Leader Rob Ortt.

A series of 13 joint Senate-Assembly budget hearings kicked off with today's forum examining for transportation.

Links to this year's live streams can be found on O'Mara's website, www.omara.nysenate.gov.

All of this year's hearings will be conducted virtually due to the ongoing pandemic. View the full hearings schedule here: https://nyassembly.gov/comm/WAM/2021hearing_schedule/.

During the hearings members of the Legislature's fiscal committees -- the Senate Finance Committee, and the Assembly Ways and Means Committee -- will hear testimony from top Cuomo administration officials, state agency heads, local leaders, and representatives of the wide range of stakeholders impacted by the state's annual budget.