



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

## Congressman Higgins, Senator Kennedy, Western New York Laborers & Building Trades Workers Press for Significant Federal Investment in Infrastructure

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY September 17, 2021

| ISSUE: **CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE, BUILD BACK BETTER, FEDERAL ASSISTANCE**



Congressman Brian Higgins (NY-26), Senator Tim Kennedy and Western New York laborers, builders, transit and construction trade workers came together to emphasize that now is the time to rebuild America.

**Higgins said**, “Infrastructure investment has a proven rate of economic return. Where public infrastructure goes, private investment follows, good-paying jobs are supported, and regional economic opportunity grows.”

"Our state and our country have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to make a massive investment in our infrastructure, and to change the lives of millions of residents for the better," said **State Senator Tim Kennedy, Chair of the Senate Transportation Committee**. "This year in New York, we secured monumental victories, including delivering historic road funding for the City of Buffalo, investing in strengthening local water infrastructure, and shaping a new green economy. It's imperative that we continue to think big in order to advance generational projects that leaders like Congressman Higgins have been championing. We need the Congressman's colleagues in Washington to also think big, and to pass President Biden's Build Back Better agenda, so that we can truly Build Back New York."

The Congressman, Senator, and workers gathered at the DL&W station, which is currently undergoing a \$52 million public [infrastructure transformation](#). Phase one and two of the project extends the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA) Metro Rail track creating a new station on the first floor of the building. Phase three of the project will see significant private sector investment to build out the second floor of the building with restaurant, retail, and other public destination features. The project extends Metro Rail service into the Canalside/Cobblestone districts, with connectivity to the adjacent Shoreline Trail.

"We are extremely thankful to Congressman Higgins who continues to fight for critical infrastructure funding for our airports, and bus and rail system. These resources are critical to public transportation and aviation in Western New York," said **Kim Minkel, NFTA Executive Director**. "Public transportation and aviation play a critical role in Western New York's post-pandemic economic recovery."

Higgins, Kennedy, and local workers stressed that Congress should go big on infrastructure investment, detailing how some of the current proposals for a 5-year federal infrastructure bill could help the region recover and support quality jobs in Western New York.

"The Bipartisan Infrastructure Framework has the power to make New York safer, cleaner and employed in solid, family-sustaining jobs for generations to come," said **Sam Capitano, Business Manager, Upstate New York Laborers' District Council**. "This legislation isn't simply an investment in our country's infrastructure – it's an investment in our country's future, and the Laborers are ready to play a pivotal role in building back better, stronger and more connected than ever before. We're thankful for Congressman Higgins' support of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Framework and ask the rest of Congress to do the same – it's the right thing to do not only for all New Yorkers, but the men and women in construction across the nation."

**Carley J. Hill, Associated General Contractors of New York, Labor Relations Director & CA Hill TECH, CEO added,** "Roads, bridges, the grid, drainage systems- these are the

backbone of our nation & communities. This is the most incredible opportunity I have seen in my lifetime for broad, progressive and inspired delivery of infrastructure building. We applaud the change makers and leaders who are making this happen for all of us. Our businesses, workers and economy will be able to grow with strength into the new millennium with this much needed program.”

### **Why infrastructure investments are critical for Western New York:**

**Roads & Bridges:** Over 1,700 bridges in New York and nearly 7,300 miles of highway in the state are in poor condition. According to the American Road & Transportation Builders Association, in Congressman Higgins district alone there are [104 bridges categorized by the Federal Highway Administration as structurally deficient](#), carrying 881,570 vehicles daily. The bipartisan framework provides \$110 billion for roads and bridges. New York would receive approximately \$11.6 billion in federal highway aid and \$1.9 billion for bridge replacement through formula funding over the next five years. Communities would also be eligible to apply for additional infrastructure funding through competitive grant programs, including \$1 billion for a new program dedicated to fixing infrastructure that has divided communities.

**Water Infrastructure:** Makes a \$55 billion investment needed to improve and replace water infrastructure. The City of Buffalo alone is home to 100 miles of lead service lines.

**Broadband:** The bipartisan infrastructure deal makes a \$65 billion investment in broadband, on top of funding previously included in the American Rescue Plan, to make sure every American has access to high-speed internet. A [report](#) issued by New York State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli this week indicated one million New York households are without broadband access including nearly 97,000 homes in Western New York. Under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, New York would receive \$100 million to expand broadband coverage.

**Weatherization:** The infrastructure deal makes a historic investment in the Weatherization Assistance Program, providing \$3.5 billion toward projects that support long-term energy-efficiency improvements in homes.

**Public Transit/Airports:** Includes the largest investment in public transit in history - \$89.9 billion for buses, rail, track, and stations - over the next five years. New York would receive \$9.8 billion in formula transit funding over the next five years. This includes funding that removes barriers to accessibility with improvements targeted to address Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance. Invests \$25 billion nationwide and \$685 million over the next five years in

New York to support airport infrastructure. These investments would boost the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority's (NFTA) ability to meet Western New York transportation needs.

**Brownfield & Superfund Cleanup:** Commits \$5 billion toward cleanup efforts at legacy pollution sites, funding particularly important for older, industrial communities like Western New York.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act includes Buy American provisions to support good-paying manufacturing jobs and Davis-Bacon requirements ensuring fair wages.

Components of the infrastructure bill are currently under consideration by Congress.