



I would like to first thank Assembly and Senate Transportation Committee Chairs Magnarelli and Cooney, as well as Ranking Members Miller and Oberacker, for affording me the opportunity to provide testimony and advocate on behalf of the residents of Putnam County, a key part of New York State Department of Transportation's Region 8, north of Westchester County, south of Dutchess County, connected to both the Hudson River and the New York-Connecticut state lines with both the Harlem and Hudson Metro-North lines running through it.

As a former member of the Assembly who served on the Transportation as well as Ways and Means committees, I spent several years in your chairs during our state's budget process, observing firsthand the important impact that New York State and the Department of Transportation can have through partnering with and assisting local and county governments with their infrastructure needs.

In 2018, I co-chaired the Assembly Minority Conference's Task Force on Transportation and Critical Infrastructure with my friend and colleague Assemblyman Phil Palmesano. That year, we gained greater insight into the needs of our state's transportation system and how we can accomplish more by working together with our local partners. I'm proud that several of the concepts and findings supported by that task force have since become reality.

During my tenure in the Assembly, I witnessed state legislators, from both political parties regardless of who was in the majority, speak out in favor of increased and sustainable state funding for local roads. This occurred not only at budget hearings but also every year at the annual "Local Roads Are Essential" or "Local Roads Matter" advocacy days when members of the Association of County Highway Superintendents and Town Superintendents of Highways visited us in Albany. It's an annual fight.

The Governor introduces the Executive Budget, and it's our allies in the state legislature who fight to restore funding to previous budget levels. It appears that this year we will once again be forced to call upon our friends in the Legislature for your assistance in restoring funding cuts in this year's Executive Budget for critical Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS) funding.

Last year, Putnam County received over \$1.2 million alone in CHIPS funding. That's \$1.2 million which would have otherwise been raised by property taxes absent state investment. It would be a blow to our Department of Public Works (DPW), as well as the highway departments for our local towns and villages who also received CHIPS funding, if we were to take a step backward in this critical support used for projects throughout our county.

The need for infrastructure repair and improvements never ceases, even as we continue to combat inflation and the financial impact felt by all county budgets thanks to the clawing back of federal Medicaid dollars (eFMAP). I therefore respectfully request the Legislature's support to provide additional funding for programs like Bridge-NY, Extreme Winter Recovery, Pave-NY, and Pave Our Potholes.

Each of these programs has the added benefit of not only supporting local governments directly, but assisting our schools, emergency first responders, economic development, hospitals, and countless other services and programs that depend on a sound and safe transportation system to function properly.

From my time in the Legislature serving on the Transportation Committee, I learned that nearly nine out of every 10 roads in our state are maintained under local jurisdiction, totaling more than 97,000 centerline miles owned by local governments compared to just over 15,000 lane miles owned by the state. Additionally, of the nearly 17,500 bridges in the state, more than half – over 8,000 – are owned by local governments.

In Putnam County, serving just under 100,000 people, our county government is responsible for maintaining 83 culverts, 31 bridges, and 116 centerline miles of county roadway. That's excluding our intermunicipal agreements where we also assist other outside agencies, including NYSDOT, with snow and plow operations. And as part of NYSDOT's Region 8, our proximity to New York City and other high population areas intensifies the beating our infrastructure gets through high traffic. We're not complaining about the business because we want people to come to Putnam County so that they can visit, fall in love, and stay in this beautiful state, the way so many of our residents have for generations. That said, this traffic does generate a cost for additional maintenance – both for Putnam County and the greater Hudson Valley region.

As part of my duties on the Assembly Minority Conference's Task Force on Transportation and Critical Infrastructure, I toured the state and participated in multiple public hearings with local officials and interested stakeholders in various related industries. We listened and issued a report with numerous solutions to solve short- and long-term concerns.

This included increasing CHIPS funding by \$100 million each year for a five-year period, increasing Bridge-NY funding to \$500 million per year, establishing a culvert-funding formula, tying CHIPS funding to the Consumer Price Index to account for inflation, and giving localities greater flexibility on their usage of CHIPS funding. I would therefore ask members of the Assembly and Senate Transportation committees to reassess these requests and continue working together with county and local governments to improve our roads and infrastructure.

While it is my intention in this testimony to speak on behalf of the residents of Putnam County and seek greater assistance for our transportation needs, I would be remiss if I did not draw attention to the great work and collaboration between Putnam County and the state Department of Transportation. This includes the completion of a resurfacing project on Route 52 in the Towns of Carmel and part of Kent between Fowler Avenue and Route 311.

There is still a significant portion of Route 52 unrepaired in the Town of Kent from Route 311 to the Dutchess County border which left many of us concerned. That's why I was pleased to recently hear the news from Assemblyman Slater, who represents five of the six towns within Putnam County, that NYSDOT has scheduled and plans to complete the job and repair Route 52 to the Dutchess County line by this fall. Additionally, NYSDOT successfully completed a major resurfacing project of Route 22 spanning a major north-south corridor within Putnam County this past summer.

With that said, I believe it is important we continue to innovate and reconsider the most effective ways to carry out projects in order to extend their life and save taxpayer money in the long run. In 2018, Route 6 received a much-needed resurfacing and repair in the heart of Carmel. During that year's Transportation budget hearing, I raised this issue directly to then-Acting Commissioner Paul Karas and brought visuals showing the road in disrepair. The project was completed, and I and the residents of Putnam County remain grateful. However, seven years later, that resurfaced portion of the road is in need of regular patching. All levels of government need to continue developing best practices to maintain and preserve their existing infrastructure.

Similar to Route 6 then, I would like to draw the state's attention today to the needs of Route 301. This state road links the western and eastern sides of Putnam County and is a main connector to the Taconic State Parkway. As a former volunteer firefighter and EMT for the Kent Fire Department that served this area, I know the road is routinely featured as a destination route for motorcycles to visit for scenic rides. Put simply: significant portions of this road have to be repaved. Furthermore, NYSDOT roads including Route 311 from Fair Street to Cornwall Hill Road, Route 164 from the Route 311 intersection to the Route 22 intersection, Route 312 from the I-84 overpass to Route 22 intersection, and Route 6 from the Route 312 intersection to Route 22 show severe signs of pavement surface distress, which is almost certainly a result of drainage and/or subsurface failures. The state should consider fully analyzing the extent of the pavement deterioration and plan the required repairs accordingly. This will prolong the road's longevity and ultimately result in a positive cost-benefit for our taxpayers. I ask that NYSDOT work to begin the process of rehabilitating these vital transportation arteries and look forward to further communication with the appropriate stakeholders to make this a reality.

We have seen what can be achieved when our state and local governments work together. As a lifetime Putnam County resident who grew up in Putnam Valley, I saw firsthand the need for the creation of the Pudding Street overpass bridge over the Taconic Parkway. For decades, school buses would be forced to cross both sides of the parkway to take students to and from the Putnam Valley School. This project dated back to Governor George Pataki, to Congressmembers Sue Kelly, John Hall, and Sean Maloney as well as Assemblyman Katz and state Senators Leibell, Ball, Gipson, and Serino. After more than 20 years of planning and local advocacy, the Pudding Street overpass was finally completed in 2021. My former colleague and current Dutchess County Executive Sue Serino played a critical role getting this project off the ground during her tenure in the Senate, and I would be remiss if I did not give her the recognition she deserves.

Since my time serving in the Assembly, I appreciated the diligence and responsiveness of NYSDOT, now led by Commissioner Marie Therese Dominguez and Region 8 Regional Director Lance MacMillan, and I thank them both. Upon taking office as County Executive two years ago, my administration was faced with a stalled bridge and road project on a county road

that was a major disruption to the lives of residents on the western side of Putnam County. The project, which had come to a complete standstill, was 80% funded with federal and state dollars. I would like to thank state DOT for working with the county as we weighed our options and developed a plan that got the project back on track and is now substantially complete.

Additionally, the Putnam County DPW worked these past two years to redesign its website, making it more transparent and user-friendly for residents looking for updates on current and future county infrastructure work. While creating the page, our IT team utilized the DOT's own "Projects in Your Neighborhood" site, which not only lists out all projects, but provides a description and updates from bid to completion with a red-yellow-green key to inform residents if the job remains on-time and on-budget. The new website has received excellent reviews and made the county government more accessible to its residents, and I would like to thank NYSDOT for the inspiration.

I know firsthand the important function these budget hearings serve for members of the Legislature, state agencies, and the public at large. I'd like to thank you for this opportunity to share my thoughts as you carry out your important work to enact a budget that is both fiscally responsible and effectively serves the needs of all New Yorkers.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin Byrne". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Kevin M. Byrne  
Putnam County Executive