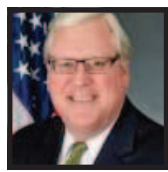


OPINION

COMMENTARY | TOM O'MARA | 58TH DISTRICT

State investment key for local roads



Tom O'Mara

No single advocacy group has stood out more at the Capitol in recent years than New York's local highway superintendents and all of the men and women working for local highway departments who, day in and day out, do their best to maintain our local roads and bridges.

Last week in Albany, more than 600 "Local Roads Matter" representatives from the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions, and statewide, turned out in force to deliver

once again the message to Governor Cuomo and legislative leaders: A stronger state-local partnership is the only answer.

Or, in the words of Gerald Geist, executive director of the Association of Towns of the State of New York, "The time to address road and bridge funding is now."

Assemblyman Phil Palmesano and I have been at this work since 2013. We have worked to build support within the Legislature for a fairer, more equitable, and stronger state commitment to local roads, bridges, and culverts.

Beginning with the 2013-14 state budget, the "Local Roads Matter" campaign has helped increase funding through the Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program (commonly known as

CHIPS) and its funding formula by \$240 million, or approximately 40%. Together with two programs established three years ago, PAVE-NY and BRIDGE-NY, significant funding increases have gone to counties, cities, towns, and villages throughout New York. Regionally, for example, aid percentage increases since 2012-13 have ranged from 50% to 55%.

This year we are calling for increasing state base aid for CHIPS by \$150 million and the restoration of a \$65-million "Extreme Winter Recovery" allocation enacted last year but not included in Governor Cuomo's proposed 2019-2020 state budget. We believe it's warranted -- and achievable -- given the governor's push for a new \$150-billion infrastructure

plan, which includes a new \$66-billion investment in transportation. There must be a place in all of that new investment for a stronger state commitment to local roads, bridges, and culverts.

A stronger state-local partnership is the key. Now more than ever, New York State must support a steady, strong, multi-year strategy to address local transportation infrastructure and help build a local transportation system that our communities, motorists, and taxpayers deserve. Local governments face increasingly difficult fiscal constraints due to the tax cap and long-stagnant state aid to municipalities, funding for which has been left even more uncertain this year. State investment in local transportation is fundamentally

important to local economic development, job creation, motorist safety, and property tax relief. Dennis S. Davis, President of the New York State County Highway Superintendents Association (NYSCHSA), said, "The hard reality is that local highway departments need a significant boost in the level of state investment to effectively address the daunting financial challenges of maintaining their vast aging and aging transportation infrastructure."

Patrick Mahar, President of the New York State Association of Town Superintendents of Highways (NYSAOTSOH), added, "Fixing local roads and bridges is similar to repairing the roof or replacing windows on your home. You don't do it

because you want to, you do it because you have to. Businesses need to receive goods, children need to get to school and emergency vehicles need to be able to provide assistance -- practically every facet of our daily lives utilizes our local infrastructure system."

This year's budget adoption process accelerates this week when the Senate and Assembly Democratic majorities adopt their respective versions of New York's final 2019-2020 state budget. In other words, they put their priorities on the page in black and white.

It's a key step in the process, and it sets the stage for a new state budget that the "Local Roads Matter" coalition hopes will produce another positive year for local roads and bridges.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Democrat promises come with cost

To the Editor,
President Herbert Hoover, a Republican, promised "a chicken in every pot and a car in every garage".

Now every Democrat presidential candidate is promising a free chicken, a free pot, a free electric car, a free garage, free health care, free college tuition and a guaranteed income even if you choose to sit on your butt and not work. Obama already gave us free cell phones.

All we have to give up is air travel, flatulent cows, our 2nd amendment rights, and most of our freedom.

Thomas Greven
Corning

Crystal Chords celebrating 25 years

To the Editor,
Twenty-Six years ago, a group of women met to talk about forming a women's singing group, to explore how to sing

a cappella 4-part harmony in the Barbershop style. They became the Crystal Chords Chorus.

Twenty-Five years ago they chartered as a chorus with Harmony, Inc. An international women's singing organization: Empowering All Women Through Education, Friendship, and Singing.

We have had much success as a chorus in our Area and at the International Competition. We have medal and most always place in the top 10. We have quartets that have medal and have won the International Competition.

We are celebrating our 25 years of singing harmony with a Community Open House on March 12th at 7:15 p.m. at the Horseheads United Methodist Church, 1034 W. Broad Street. We would love to share our love of singing and our wonderful organization.

The Crystal Chords, Ordinary women ... coming together to make extraordinary music.
Nancy Arkin

Big Flats

Fight criminal inaction in the world

To the Editor,
Although I was not in the US for the event, and this letter is too late for the Extinction Rebellion global event in January, I must try again to alert my friends and neighbors to the problem - and a solution.

This movement, advocating civil disobedience on a massive scale, started in the UK in October. The group issued a press statement including this declaration:

"The disruption we have caused today is nothing to the destruction that is being unleashed by our leaders' criminal inaction on climate and ecological breakdown. Just yesterday a WWF report announced that humanity has wiped out 60 percent of mammals, fish, birds and reptiles since 1970, yet Philip Hammond, MP, entirely neglected to mention climate breakdown in his budget. Our politicians have failed us. We must take our future into our own hands.

Today we pledge, in accordance with our consciences, and with a clear duty to our children, our communities, this nation

and the planet, a non-violent rebellion on behalf of life itself and against our criminally negligent government. The abject failure to protect citizens and the next generations from unimaginable suffering brought about by climate breakdown and social collapse is no longer tolerable.

We will not stand idly by and allow the ongoing destruction of all that we love. Our hearts break and we rage against this madness. We have a right and a duty to rebel in the face of this tyranny of idiocy, of this planned collective suicide. Join us."

What is true for the UK is more so for the US, especially under an administration which is actively reversing actions and legislation that might make a difference. I have joined the movement, and I call on everyone who reads this letter to find some way to fight against the "criminal inaction" that is apparent at all levels of government as well as in the corporate world.

Rise up. Take action.
Elizabeth Whitehouse
Corning

Landfill affects more than Campbell

To the Editor,
For those who have never seen the Hakes Landfill, I strongly recommend you drive up Erwin Hollow Road off the Victory Highway in Painted Post.

Take a sharp left on Manning Ridge Road to the landfill. It is a shocking sight towering over the hills of the Finger Lakes region. Roughly five miles from Corning, a steady stream of tractor trailer trucks speeds up winding roads to deliver loads of construction and demolition waste to the landfill.

The Town of Campbell is considering rezoning tax parcels owned by the landfill, making way for a proposed expansion. Now 57 acres, it would expand to 80 acres, plus 22.4 acres for construction and cover materials.

I only recently discovered the extent of the landfill operation, and I am dismayed by its conflict with the Finger Lakes image we promote to tourists and other visitors. It is an eyesore and a health hazard. People living in the vicinity of the landfill report sickening odors coming from the landfill as well as pollution

from the constant truck traffic. Trucks overturn on the steep road, and many drivers report near misses with speeding trucks.

The landfill accepts drill cuttings from fracking sites in Pennsylvania. The Sierra Club and People for a Healthy Environment claim that levels of Lead-214 and Bismuth-214 reported by the company show high levels of radon and radium in the landfill.

It is not just those living in the immediate vicinity of the landfill who should be concerned about these issues. Our air and water quality are at risk.

An April 2018 news report: a truck full of trash overturned on Erwin Hollow Road, taking out a guardrail and spilling garbage into the creek adjacent to the roadway. The truck was heading up to the Hakes Landfill before it rolled over and tipped its load while taking a sharp left turn.

The Campbell Town Board meets Monday, March 11, 7 p.m. at the Town Hall; a decision could be made then. Please attend to indicate that the impact of this decision reaches far beyond the Town of Campbell.

Marcia D. Weber
Painted Post

The March CIRG meeting
Wednesday, March 13th

Will be at the Riverfront Cafe on March 13th at 10:00 and the speaker will be Charlotte Dugan, Board of Directors Treasurer for Bampa's House. Charlotte, a Corning native was married to Jim who Bampa's house is named after. Bampa's House is a comfort care home that focuses on making a person's last days as comfortable, safe and peaceful as possible. She will discuss her effort to make this end of life care happen in Corning and its progress so far. Please call Linda McDonald at 607-368-2243 by March 11 if you plan to attend.

(If school is cancelled or on a 2 hour delay, we will cancel the meeting. Parking is free in the Corning parking garage near the Arch. All retirees and their family/friends are invited to join us)

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KENT BUSH | OPINION

Goodbye to another communications director

One joke among pundits in Washington D.C. is that the job of communications director for President Donald Trump is cursed. It isn't cursed. It is just impossible.

Some look at the list of communications directors over the past 50 years and note that President Trump has sent more directors to their next job in two years than any other President in four or eight years.

Perhaps it is the turmoil. Maybe its the scandals. It could be the horrible relationship this administration has with the press.

I'm sure all of those things make the job difficult. But the real issue with the job is that you are never the one doing it.

The White House Communications Director in the current administration has been Sean Spicer, Mike Dubke, Anthony Scaramucci (for a glorious two weeks), Hope Hicks (after she finished steaming Trump's pants

while he was wearing them), and former Fox News President Bill Shine (who left the channel after multiple sexual harassment lawsuits).

Now Shine has resigned to move from his current post the 2020 re-election campaign.

There is a lot of excitement over who the new communications director will be. The communications director will be the same one that has been in place since the November 2016 election - Donald J. Trump.

Between his off-script speeches, off-topic press conferences, and his omnipresent Twitter feed, President Trump has never displayed the ability to "stay on message" when it comes to the goals of the administration.

A big part of the communications director's job is to frame the administration's goals and activities to shine a positive light on the work and help gain or maintain support.

Trump doesn't do

that. The only message he has stayed with is the "no collusion" line. He can do it. He picks nicknames for Lyin' Ted Cruz and Little Marco Rubio and others and can keep that narrative strong.

But even when it comes to his own pet project - the wall across the country's southern border - Trump has shown no discipline at all. He has declared the situation at the southern border to be a national emergency. Then he told reporters that he could have waited for Congress to fund the wall but the emergency declaration was simply faster. Of course, that sentence will be used in every lawsuit against the wall, and probably successfully. Trump also can't keep from calling it a wall when others have deemed that steel slats or a fence are terms that more people are willing to accept.

He will change the terminology briefly but then revert to calling it a wall again during an interview

or a Twitter tirade.

Guess who has to reconfigure all messaging after that spur of the moment decision by the President? Guess why Trump is about to hire his sixth person for that job.

Some people love what Trump is doing in the first half of his term. Others hate it. One thing is certain, nothing is normal, predictable or even controllable. I can't imagine taking that job. I know there are some who believe they have the secret recipe to make it work. Five of them have already seen their secret recipe fall apart when the heat was turned up. It should be interesting to see who is chosen and what changes are made in that department and whether the new director will still be around to see the July 4 celebration.

Kent Bush is publisher of Shawnee (Oklahoma) News-Star and can be reached at kent.bush@news-star.com.