



**TESTIMONY OF JOAN M. MCDONALD, COMMISSIONER  
NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
BEFORE THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE FISCAL COMMITTEES  
HAMILTON HEARING ROOM B, LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING  
JANUARY 29, 2015**

**INTRODUCTION**

Chairman DeFrancisco, Chairman Farrell, Chairman Robach, Chairman Marcellino, Chairman Gantt and members of the Legislative Fiscal and Transportation Committees, thank you for this opportunity to discuss Governor Cuomo's Executive Budget as it pertains to the Department of Transportation (DOT) for the 2015-16 State fiscal year (SFY). I am Joan McDonald, Commissioner of DOT.

**PREPAREDNESS**

One of the primary functions of State Government is to ensure the safety of its residents. Each and every day, DOT plays an integral role in assuring the safety of the traveling public - from bridge inspections to traffic signal maintenance to winter snow and ice control. Snow and ice control is one of the more challenging aspects due to the unpredictability and volatility of weather patterns. Following on the heels of several years of extreme weather events, this winter season started early with the November Lake Effect Snow Storm in Western New York. That storm resulted in the largest winter deployment of personnel and equipment in the Department's history. At its peak, nearly 1,000 DOT staff and more than 600 pieces of heavy-equipment were mobilized from as far away as Long Island to assist impacted towns, counties and cities with the response and recovery efforts. Earlier this week a blizzard inundated parts of Long Island with more than two-feet of snow. In preparation for this major event, the Department deployed approximately 300 pieces of heavy-equipment and more than 580 staff from regions outside the impacted areas.

To enhance DOT's capacity to respond to these extreme weather events, the Budget provides \$50 million for versatile emergency vehicles, including additional snow plows. This funding will also support equipping the Department's existing snow and ice control fleet with a state-of-the-art GPS system that will track assets in real time and aid with emergency deployments.

**SFY 2015-16 EXECUTIVE BUDGET**

Last week, Governor Cuomo detailed a six-point infrastructure plan that outlines his vision to strengthen and modernize New York's infrastructure. The plan recognizes that the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy require that New York State not only renew its investment in transportation systems, but that we need to build better, faster and stronger to compete.

The Executive Budget makes new State investments to improve the transportation system, enhance the system's resiliency, create jobs, and deliver operating aid for transit systems. The Executive Budget includes more than \$3.5 billion in new capital program funding during SFY 2015-16. Of that amount, more than \$2.5 billion in new funding is provided to support the Department's highway and bridge program. Building upon the Governor's support for sustained investment in roads and bridges, DOT's budget utilizes the first \$150 million of a new \$750 million five-year bridge initiative. This initiative will strategically accelerate the rehabilitation, reconstruction or replacement of more than 100 bridges statewide serving critical freight; agriculture and commerce corridors. DOT's Budget also provides \$438 million in additional funding for local highway and bridge projects under the Consolidated Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS); \$39.7 million for the local matching share of federally-aided projects under the Marchiselli program; and more than \$4.9 billion to support the operation of local transit systems.

## **DESIGN BUILD**

Prior to the enactment of the Infrastructure Investment Act of 2011 (Act), DOT delivered construction contracts through a traditional Design-Bid-Build process. By combining the design and construction phases of a project into one contract, project delivery is faster and more efficient, and project benefits are delivered to the public sooner. Since being signed into law in 2011, DOT has awarded 10 Design-Build contracts valued in excess of \$811 million, including the Department's largest ever single contract, the \$550 million Kosciuszko Bridge. These projects are underway throughout the State, and the results are overwhelmingly positive: projects are being delivered sooner; on-budget; and jobs are being created. In addition to these 10 contracts there are currently 13 more under procurement, totaling an additional \$290 million. The Act's benefits are clear and Design-Build authority should be made permanent.

## **PROTECTION FROM IMPACTS CRUDE OIL TRAINS**

After a series of tragic accidents in Quebec, North Dakota, and Alabama demonstrated the volatile nature of this crude oil, DOT, DEC and DHSES worked with Governor Cuomo to push the federal government for closer regulation of the crude oil transportation industry. To better prepare the State, Executive Order 125 was issued, which directed a crude oil inter-agency work group to comprehensively assess emergency response preparedness, implement aggressive enforcement and inspection initiatives, and work with partner railroads to coordinate preparedness activities. During calendar year 2014, DOT inspectors and their federal partners have conducted an aggressive targeted track and railcar inspection program. During the course of the year, we have inspected 7,368 rail cars (including 5,360 DOT-111 crude oil tank cars) and 2,659 miles of track, uncovered and required corrective action for 840 defects, and issued 12 hazardous materials violations. The defects we found prove that efforts to increase inspections are working to identify problems and help reduce the risk of transporting crude oil in New York State.

## **CONCLUSION**

In closing, the investments being made in the State's transportation system will move New York forward so that it will meet the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy.