



**TESTIMONY OF JOAN MCDONALD, COMMISSIONER
NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION BEFORE
THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE FISCAL COMMITTEES
HAMILTON HEARING ROOM B, LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
THURSDAY, JANUARY 31, 2013**

INTRODUCTION

Chairman DeFrancisco, Chairman Farrell, Chairman Fuschillo, 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 2013-14 State fiscal year (SFY). I am Joan McDonald, Commissioner of DOT.

STORM RESPONSE

Let me start this morning by recognizing the dedicated men and women of DOT who keep our State *open for business!* One of the outstanding attributes of DOT is the Agency's ability to respond during times of need. A little more than a year after the one-two punch delivered by Hurricane Lee and Tropical Storm Irene, our mettle was tested more than ever by the devastation caused by Superstorm Sandy. The size and scope of the on-going recovery effort from Sandy remains daunting. Thanks to Governor Cuomo's leadership and the great work of our own forces and construction industry partners, most of New York's roads and bridges were quickly reopened to traffic. At the peak of the storm response, more than 2,000 lane miles were impacted by the storm surge - rendering them temporary impassable due to flooding; downed power-lines and trees; and/or debris. DOT crews from around the State worked expeditiously to open the state and local roadway system within days. In addition to deploying maintenance staff, hundreds of DOT engineers - working with our industry partners - conducted nearly 3,000 bridge and large overhead sign inspections and completed more than 9,000 damage assessments. Work continues on long-term restoration efforts in the region.

SFY 2013-14 EXECUTIVE BUDGET

The Executive Budget and Management Plan unveiled by Governor Cuomo last week makes significant new capital investments to improve the transportation system, enhance the system's resiliency, create jobs, and deliver historic levels of aid for transit systems as they recover from Superstorm Sandy.

The Executive Budget includes \$300 million of new State funding under the NY Works program to maintain, repair and replace critical highway, bridge and other transportation infrastructure, and to prolong the useful life of these assets. This includes \$200 million for core infrastructure

improvements throughout the State. Additionally, to encourage regional economic development and to help leverage private investment, \$100 million for all modes of transportation infrastructure will be awarded competitively through the Regional Economic Development Councils. This State-financed capital enhancement builds upon core transportation funding to provide a total DOT capital program of nearly \$3.7 billion, including highways, bridges, rail, aviation, non-MTA transit, and DOT facilities. Funding for local highway and bridge projects under the Consolidated Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS) and Marchiselli program is maintained at \$402.8 million. In addition, the Budget provides operating support totaling \$4.7 billion to transit systems. The MTA will receive more than \$4.2 billion, an increase of approximately \$358 million from 2012-13, and other transit systems will receive over \$454 million, which reflects an increase of \$23.5 million.

NY Works

Governor Cuomo's NY Works program has provided DOT with an unprecedented opportunity to accelerate the delivery of hundreds of additional bridge and pavement projects statewide. I am pleased to report that within months of receiving authorization to proceed, DOT developed and let 24 bundled paving contracts totaling \$250 million. These contracts were essentially delivered during the current SFY and improved more than 2,100 lane miles at 172 sites within 12 months. In addition, DOT developed a program to accelerate improvements for 112 bridges using 12 bundled contracts worth \$212 million. More than 95% of these bridge projects were awarded within nine months of program inception, from planning to construction start. This included \$85 million in Design Build contracts awarded within eight months of the enabling legislation. In total, 40 of the bridges were substantially completed this year and the program of 112 bridges will be completed on schedule in 2013. During the upcoming construction season, DOT will continue to advance larger NY Works projects such as the Kosciuszko Bridge, Paterson Bridge, Long Island Bridge Parapets, Sprain Brook Parkway, Kendrick Road, and the Patroon Island Bridge.

BUILDING A NEW NEW YORK

At DOT, we continue to look for innovative opportunities to work with local governments to advance projects that creatively finance improvements to our infrastructure. While we have many challenges we also have many unique opportunities to imaginatively work together and redefine how we look at infrastructure. This was apparent when I was in Rochester for the opening of the Diverging Diamond at Winton Road and 590. While this European design had never been done before in New York and only a few times across the country, DOT leaned on their talented professionals to research this new method and build the confidence of the public to build the first Diverging Diamond in the State. The cost of the project was redefined from a \$20 million dollar project to a \$4.9 million dollar project.

Additionally, DOT has collaborated with local governments to creatively utilize "public/private" partnerships. Examples of these partnerships include:

- The new pedestrian underpass on Route 9 at Marist College in Poughkeepsie.
- Kendrick Road over I-390 in the City of Rochester, in partnership with the University of Rochester, and
- The Fuller Road Improvement, in partnership with the City of Albany and the SUNY Nanoscale Science and Engineering Center.

These projects were done either through direct investment in the transportation system or through support of existing and emerging economic development opportunities.

DRIVERS FIRST

In September, Governor Cuomo announced a new Drivers First initiative directing NYSDOT to place an even higher priority on motorist convenience when planning highway maintenance construction projects. To implement the initiative, I have formed a Drivers First Task Force within DOT. The task force has completed a thorough review of state highway and bridge repair projects accounting for corridor, cost and complexity to ensure that work zone disruptions are as minimal as possible for motorists. As the Governor has said, we must prioritize the convenience of motorists and ensure that we minimize the disruptions to drivers caused by our highway and bridge projects across the state.

CONCLUSION

DOT is successfully using new procurement methods, such as design-build, pre-qualification of contractors and best value, in addition to the traditional design-bid-build procedure to deliver its capital program. I'm proud that the Department is once again a national leader in delivering our capital program through award-winning innovations. In recognition of these efforts, this past November the Department received the President's Award from the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) for our Forward Four Asset Management process.

In conclusion, Governor Cuomo has made historic investment in transportation infrastructure by empowering ingenuity which is the cornerstone of technological advancement and establishing new methods of project delivery thereby creating a blueprint for job creation. DOT is excited to play a central role in the State's economic recovery and expansion.

Thank you for your time and I am happy to respond to any questions you may have regarding DOT's budget.

