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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE FISCAL COMMITTEES**

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**INTRODUCTION**

Chairs Krueger, Weinstein, Kennedy, Magnarelli and distinguished members of the Legislature, on behalf of the Department of Transportation, thank you for this opportunity to discuss Governor Cuomo's Executive Budget.

**RESPONSE TO COVID-19**

First and foremost, I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank each and every member of our DOT Team for all that they have done throughout the on-going global health pandemic. Not only have DOT staff delivered on a record level infrastructure program and enhanced safety for the traveling public over the past year, they quickly pivoted to play a prominent role in Governor Cuomo's statewide COVID-19 response efforts. Let me highlight a few of the heroic actions the men and women of the Department are taking to fight this deadly virus. Since early March, DOT has led the statewide Emergency Support Function for transportation and logistics under the State's comprehensive emergency management plan. Our dedicated team has been on the ground seven-days a week for 11 months. DOT personnel have:

- Helped to stand-up and support temporary hospitals, testing facilities and vaccination centers;
- Distributed more than two and a half million test kits to nearly 1,200 health care facilities;
- Delivered more than 50,000 critical testing specimens to Wadsworth Laboratory;
- Vetted more than 80,000 volunteer healthcare professionals from all over the country on behalf of the Department of Health; and
- Fielded more than 400,000 calls into the State's dedicated pandemic response call centers.

The selfless actions on the part of these DOT employees have helped to slow the spread and save the lives of countless New Yorkers in every region of our State.

**UNCERTAINTY OF FEDERAL FUNDING**

The pandemic blindsided New Yorkers when the federal government failed to act to keep us safe, as the virus quickly spread from Europe. The subsequent economic upheaval has left the State with a \$15 billion deficit and we need Washington to act responsibly and deliver funding to close it so that the State can meet essential, baseline spending needs. Governor Cuomo stated it best during his budget address - over the past four years the federal government has consistently failed New York. They have failed to provide adequate resources to a State that produces approximately eight percent of the nation's GDP and contributes approximately \$23 billion more annually to Washington than it receives. New York for decades has subsidized the vast majority of other states, resulting in an imbalance in basic tax fairness. There is, however, hope for optimism. With a new Administration and a new Congress, the prospects for an additional stabilization and economic recovery funding package from the federal government have greatly

improved. In addition to basic fairness, the State also seeks federal assistance to reimagine, rebuild, and renew New York. After all, for the nation to prosper, New York must remain strong and vibrant. We must continue to modernize our public transportation systems; we must continue to transform our airport, freight rail and seaport infrastructure; and we must continue to build and renew roads and bridges in every community of this great State.

## **REIMAGE. RENEW. REBUILD.**

Building upon the Governor's unparalleled commitment to renewing and modernizing infrastructure, the budget outlines \$306 billion in infrastructure projects which will create hundreds of thousands of jobs; make generational investments; and strengthen our State's diverse regional economies. In fact, New Yorkers are already benefiting from the projects funded through his initial infrastructure plan, including:

- Modernization of multiple commercial service airports and rail stations throughout upstate New York;
- Reconstruction and elevation of the Nassau Expressway in the Long Island Region;
- Reconstruction of Prospect Mountain interchange in the Southern Tier Region;
- Construction of the new eastbound ramp on Interstate 690 and pedestrian access enhancements at the State Fairgrounds in the Central New York Region.

Building upon unprecedented DOT investments over the past decade, the Executive Budget fully honors the second year of the record-level two-year capital plan. The two-year DOT capital plan is supporting \$11.9 billion in investments to renew and modernize the state's infrastructure. Compared to the final two years of the last DOT Capital Plan, this current plan represents an increase of \$3.0 billion or 33 percent. This record level of investment provides DOT with resources necessary to renew, modernize and continue to drive economic development in local communities, while ensuring a more resilient transportation infrastructure for years to come. The proposed budget also provides support to advance projects that will reverse the marginalization of communities that occurred during the construction of the interstate highway system, including replacing the Interstate 81 viaduct with a community grid; reimagining the Buffalo Skyway into a community boulevard; and converting the Albany Skyway into a new linear park.

The shorter, two-year capital plan is necessitated by federal funding uncertainty. The federal Surface Transportation Act was extended for one year and is now set to expire on September 30, 2021. Unlike the MTA Capital Plan, where federal aid accounts for approximately 20 percent of total spending, the DOT Capital Plan has historically relied on federal aid for more than 40 percent of its spending. Due to the ongoing uncertainty at the federal level, the State is making the prudent decision to commit, at this juncture, to the second year of a two-year plan while working with the New York congressional delegation to move the renewal of the FAST Act forward.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Executive Budget remains contingent upon the federal government delivering the resources necessary to offset COVID-19 expenses and mitigate the revenue losses caused by the pandemic ravaging our state's economy. Federal support is not only just and fair, it is essential for our State and nation to prosper. Recognizing that infrastructure investments fuel economic recovery, Governor Cuomo has doubled down on accelerating outcome-focused transformational projects in every region of the State in a fiscally and environmentally responsible manner. To quote Governor Cuomo, *"New York has faced*

*challenges before and has not only survived but thrived and grown stronger.”* With the federal government as our partner, we can do it again. In closing, I cannot tell you how incredibly proud I am of all that DOT has accomplished – given the on-going public health crisis. I want to assure you that the Department of Transportation is committed to working with you on delivering on the Governor’s bold vision for reimagining, renewing and rebuilding New York’s infrastructure.

Thank you.