November 8, 2019

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of the State of New York
Executive Chamber
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

The Citizens Budget Commission (CBC) recommends that you sign A4880/S1673, which would improve capital planning for transportation infrastructure in New York State by requiring the State Department of Transportation (DOT) to:

- Develop a 20-year intermodal transportation capital plan,
- Develop a 5-year capital plan for transportation projects,
- Hold regional hearings on transportation capital planning,
- Biannually submit to the Governor and Legislature a list of current and planned transportation capital projects, and
- Provide explanations of major delays and cost overruns on individual projects.

These provisions would begin to align the DOT capital planning process with best practices before the next five-year DOT capital plan, which will cover fiscal years 2021 to 2025. Improving transportation capital planning now is especially crucial as dedicated revenue declines, deferred maintenance accumulates, and the condition of the State’s transportation and transit assets continue to lag behind the nation.¹

In a 2017 report, CBC documented the flaws in the State’s capital planning process and recommended reforms.² Recent transportation capital plans have been adopted based on achieving “parity” between spending for the DOT and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority.³ This approach is indicative of a budgeting practice that is guided by political considerations rather than by informed evaluations of resources and needs. The inadequacy of current practices has contributed to the poor condition of New York’s roads and bridges relative to the nation.

This bill should be signed into law. Subsequent legislation should add provisions to further strengthen the planning process by requiring DOT to outline goals and strategies for maintaining and improving transportation assets and make public a summary of the inventory of assets, asset quality, recently completed projects, and performance relative to predetermined goals.

I encourage you to sign this bill into law and pursue further enhancements to the State’s transportation capital planning process.

Sincerely,

Andrew S. Rein
President

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