

Griffo, colleagues call for CHIPS funding return



State Sen. Joseph Griffo, R-C-Rome. (AP FILE)

Oneida Daily Dispatch By **THE DISPATCH STAFF** | newsroom@oneidadispatch.com

ALBANY, N.Y. — New York State Sen. Joseph Griffo, R-C-Rome, Assemblyman Robert Smullen, R-C-Meco, Assemblyman Brian Miller, R-C-New Hartford, and Assemblywoman Marianne Buttenschon, D-C-Marcy, joined area highway superintendents and urged Gov. Kathy Hochul to restore funding in the state budget to help local governments maintain and improve infrastructure.

The governor's proposed state budget calls for the continuation of valuable programs such as the Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program, CHIPS; Extreme Winter Recovery, Pave Our Potholes and PAVE-NY.

However, it would decrease funding for CHIPS by \$60 million and cut \$40 million from the State Touring Routes Program, which helps municipalities maintain, construct and repair highways, bridges, highway-railroad crossings and other transportation facilities.

The cuts to CHIPS and STR, they believe, have been proposed at a time when many local governments in the state are facing challenges addressing infrastructure-related issues.

According to a report by the American Society of Engineers, half of New York's roads are in fair or poor condition while 10% of its bridges are in poor condition.

"CHIPS and infrastructure funding in the state budget help communities make critical investments in their roads, bridges, dams, culverts and underground utilities," Griffo said. "Making cuts to these programs mean that it will be more difficult to maintain, repair and enhance our infrastructure, which continues to deteriorate."

TRIP, a national transportation advocacy group, indicates that, due to inadequate state and local funding, 43% of major locally and state-maintained roads and highways in New York are in poor or mediocre condition. Driving on rough roads costs the average New York driver \$715 annually in additional vehicle operating costs – a total of \$8.7 billion statewide.

"As a member of the Senate's Transportation Committee, I will continue to be a strong voice for the local governments I represent and for parity to ensure that upstate cities, towns and villages are treated fairly and get the resources they need to address concerns," Griffo said in a recent news release from his office.

The CHIPS program was established by the NYS Legislature in 1981. Between State Fiscal Year 1982-83 and 1990-91, April 1, 1982 – March 31, 1991, all CHIPS funds were distributed on a direct grant quarterly allocation basis. In 1991, State Legislation restructured CHIPS into two separate and distinct components.

One was the Operation and Maintenance, or O&M, direct grant component, funded from the State's General Fund. The other was the Capital reimbursement component, funded from the sale of New York State Thruway Authority bonds.

While no CHIPS O&M funding has been included since the SFY 2001-02 State Budget, the Legislature converted these funds into additional CHIPS Capital funds that have been appropriated since SFY 2002-03.

Effective April 1, 2014, CHIPS is funded in the first instance by a budget appropriation, and reimbursements are being issued by the Office of the State Comptroller rather than by the Thruway Authority.