June 8, 2020

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

Dear Governor Cuomo:

On behalf of the Associated General Contractors of New York State, New York State Association of Counties, Association of Towns of the State of New York and the New York Conference of Mayors, we appreciate the cooperative partnership you initiated to bring the COVID-19 pandemic under control. We understand firsthand both the enormous human and economic toll this virus has inflicted.

Your Administration has rightfully called on Washington to provide direct financial assistance to state and local governments struggling with the costs and economic impacts of COVID-19, a message we clearly echo and support. We also agree with your call that infrastructure investment can “supercharge” our economic recovery.

In that spirit, our collective memberships respectfully request that you immediately release the local highway funding contained in the 2020-21 adopted state budget. The 2020-21 Enacted Budget included $438 million for the Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS), $39.7 million for the Marchiselli program, $100 million for PAVE-NY, $100 million for BRIDGE-NY and $65 million for Extreme Winter Recovery (EWR). These appropriations are the financial lifeblood of New York’s local highway departments, distributing vital state funding through a formula to every local government. The majority of New York’s 1,600 municipalities receive no federal highway assistance.

New York’s highway construction season is short, typically running from May through mid-September. This timeframe makes the situation of local highway infrastructure funding unique—and critical. If and when Washington comes through for New York, it might be too late for this essential infrastructure work to be completed. We are quickly approaching the precipice where if the State does not release the local highway funding allocations soon, this critical safety work will not be performed before the construction season is over. And, as you know, the longer infrastructure maintenance is delayed, the more costly it becomes in the future.
New York’s massive local highway system uses one of the State’s oldest and most successful public private partnerships to maintain our infrastructure and strengthen our local economies. The delay in providing disbursement letters has ground local highway construction to a halt in every region of the State, resulting in thousands of unemployed construction workers. In April, New York experienced the largest construction job loss in the nation over the month, with a staggering loss of 166,200 jobs, erasing 40.8% of construction employment in New York State.

When the letters are released, municipalities will feel secure enough to proceed with their capital programs, similar to what the State itself is doing. This would put these hardworking men and women back on the job and significantly benefit the local and State economies.

You have been a proven leader supporting infrastructure efforts. We understand the daunting scale of New York’s fiscal and economic crisis, but holding up local highway funding is compounding that crisis by increasing unemployment and creating the potential of even greater infrastructure costs to the State and local governments in the future.

We respectfully urge you to consider our request and help make our local roads, bridges and culverts statewide safer for the traveling public.

Very truly yours,

Michael J. Elmendorf II
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Peter Baynés
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CC: Robert Mujica, Director, New York State Division of the Budget
    Marie Therese Dominguez, Commissioner, New York State Department of Transportation