

November 24, 2008

The Honorable Brian M. Higgins
Larkin Building, Suite 601
726 Exchange Street
Buffalo, New York 14210

Dear Congressman Higgins:

In recognition of your substantial contribution to the motorists of Western New York for your major role in the removal of the tolls on the I-190, I am requesting your support for an equally important initiative. Last Friday, I spoke at a regional transportation meeting to support the Thruway Authority's proposal to relocate the Williamsville and Lackawanna Toll Barriers as called for in the NYS Thruway Authority Mobility and Modernization Study Report. As with many good ideas, the implementation makes sense, but lacks a funding source. Therefore, I was interested to note that the objective of President-elect Obama's Economic Recovery plan is to spend money on capital projects to stimulate job creation and retention,

As you are well-aware, our community has endured the presence of Toll Barriers at Lackawanna and Williamsville for decades. If any part of the State is entitled to relief, it is ours. Therefore, I believe that the long-awaited removal of these Toll Barriers from within the commuting range of Buffalo should be on the list of projects funded by the stimulus plan. In the short term, jobs will be created in the demolition and construction of the new "Free Urban Hybrid Model that could expand the free area for our commuters along the Thruway. Even better, our motorists will finally be free from the cost of tolls and the long waits at the barriers. Personally, if federal money is to be spent at all, I believe our constituents would rather it money be spent here, where we could use the help, than see it go to other parts of the country. It's the least our federal government can do since our drivers are hit with the highest gas prices in America. Our drivers need a break, and this could be the start.

Since President-elect Obama has stated that he intends to sign his Economic Recovery plan soon after taking office, I believe now is the time to enlist support for the inclusion of funding for the relocation of these barriers as set forth in the Free Urban Hybrid Model.

In order to attract new business and people to our community, we need to reduce the costs of living and working in Western New York. Tolls are just another wedge to drive people away while hurting businesses small and large. I look forward to speaking with you to further explore this concept.

Sincerely yours,

Kathleen C. Hochul
Erie County Clerk