



**Office of the Mayor
City of Utica**

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New York State Senate Transportation Committee Testimony

November 23, 2009-

Good Afternoon. My name is David Roefaro, and I am the Mayor of the City of Utica.

I'd like to thank the Senate Transportation Committee for holding this hearing today. I would also like to thank Chairman Dilan for his gesture of transparency and hard work on the Transportation Committee.

I'd also like to commend the NYSDOT for their statewide efforts. The NYSDOT is one of the best functioning and cooperative agencies I have worked with since elected mayor in 2007. I'd especially like to recognize my Regional Director, Michael Shamma. He is truly an adept representative of the agency, and a great partner for the City of Utica.

I am here today taking advantage of the invitation to speak about the NYSDOT five-year capital plan. I have taken the time to read the plan. It is an excellent plan. It is a plan that does address many of our state's needs.

However, it does not address our state's uncertainties- uncertainties that have many of my fellow mayors very nervous. I don't need to reiterate the challenges mayors across this state are facing, because as fellow elected leaders, you know them.

As you know, Moody's sent us a warning last week- reduce our deficit with cuts in the next three months, or lose our Aa3 bond rating. Translation- higher taxes for New Yorkers.

As you know, seven states have had Moody's downgrade their rating in the last few weeks.

As you know, December is here- AIM funding is due, the STAR rebates, and Medicaid payouts.

And as you know, this plan is too unpredictable.

Let me quote a statement from the five-year capital plan for a moment. It says,

“Achievements of the objectives described in this plan are dependent on adequate financial resources at the federal and State level, and, in some cases, investment from local government.”

This portion of the five-year plan had me a little concerned. You see, it's hard enough for me, as a mayor, to project the costs of one year, let alone five years ahead. And then, to see that aspects of this plan will require unknown investment amounts from cities like Utica, worries me even more.

The five-year plan goes on to say, *“The current fiscal constraints at both the federal and State government will affect the pace at which these objectives can be achieved,”* and that *“...the program and project cost estimates included were developed from existing data sources to frame the total value of a five-year transportation program that begins on April 1, 2010.”*

That doesn't sound too confident to me. But again, it's not the plan that worries me, it's paying for it. **I'm doing my own budget right now, and realistically or responsibly, I can't tell the taxpayers we'll have the money you seek in the next five years. As the mayor, I don't want the people of Utica to have to foot the bill for any plan that will be too costly.**

The capital plan even admits, *“...the State Dedicated Highway and Bridge Trust Fund cannot afford to pay existing commitments without substantial general fund support and additional revenue is needed to fund any new capital program.”*

Where will we get this 'additional revenue' from? I hope it doesn't come from the aforementioned 'local investment' revenue driver, because Uticans can't afford to support a plan like this while they're struggling to feed their families.

Mr. Chairman, we all recognize the great deal of planning and work that has gone into this five-year capital plan, and the needs it hopes to address, but do we really know where New York will be in five years? Moody's doesn't, and neither does the state department of transportation.

Therefore, I am asking this committee and the state department of transportation to **consider a one-year capital plan**, instead of five.

A one-year plan will allow all of us to honestly address our needs with our ability to pay for them. A one-year plan will show our stakeholders, our creditors, and most importantly, our taxpayers, that we aren't living beyond our means, that we aren't turning a blind eye to the perilous economic situation facing New Yorkers.

Mr. Chairman, I implore this hardworking committee to remake this five-year capital plan into a one-year plan. Perhaps, **a one-year plan that specifically details the amount of 'local investment' needed to accomplish this work.**

In closing, I'd like to reiterate my support for the *overall* capital plan, and my hope that like New Yorkers, our state too, realizes we can't keep charging our hopes.