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JONATHAN G. JACOBSON  
104<sup>th</sup> District

February 5, 2020

Hon. Andrew M. Cuomo  
The Capitol  
Albany, New York 12224

Hon. Andrea Stewart Cousins  
L.O.B #907  
Albany, New York 12247

Hon. Carl Heastie  
L.O.B. #932  
Albany, New York 12248

Re: Proposed Merger of the New York State Bridge Authority into the New York State Thruway Authority

Dear Governor Cuomo:

We write on behalf of our constituents to address the proposed abolition of the New York Bridge Authority and its subsequent absorption into the New York State Thruway Authority. It is our conviction that the proposal would drastically and detrimentally affect both the economy and the overall quality of life in the region.

Since its founding, the Bridge Authority's mission has been "to maintain and operate the safe vehicle crossings over the Hudson River entrusted to its jurisdiction for the economic and social benefit of the people of the State of New York." It has successfully carried out that mission for more than ninety years and continues to do so.

Your office has put forward this proposal arguing that it "will create the opportunity for efficiencies." Yet, the Bridge Authority, unlike many other State agencies, is already highly regarded for its efficiency.

Tolls are kept low and the five bridges in its portfolio—the Rip-Van Winkle Bridge, the Kingston-Rhinecliff Bridge, the Mid-Hudson Bridge, the Newburgh-Beacon Bridge, and the Bear Mountain Bridge—are all kept in good repair thanks to the Bridge Authority's regular and scrupulous maintenance.

These five bridges constitute a vital link between municipalities on both sides of the Hudson, offering residents a fast, safe, and reliable way to get to work, shop, attend school, and visit doctors and other services across the river from their homes. They are, indeed, our "main streets."

While the level of tolls on Mid-Hudson bridges may seem low by comparison to other such crossings in New York City and other metropolitan areas, they are appropriately scaled to the region in terms of their nature as thoroughfares and relative affordability, particularly in view of the many other economic challenges we face. In brief, creating a new administrative structure where Mid-Hudson residents may be forced to subsidize other drivers is unnecessary, ill advised, and anti-progressive.

The Bridge Authority's toll structure is essential to the valuable service it provides. While it may pass unnoticed by casual users, all five bridges charge the same toll, encouraging travelers to use the bridge most conveniently situated to them—and not the bridge that charges the lowest toll. This allows the traffic, costs, and benefits of its five bridges to be spread evenly throughout the region.

Moreover, the money taken in by the Bridge Authority is spent solely on maintaining and staffing the Authority and these five bridges. This keeps funding generated by the Hudson Valley bridges in the Hudson Valley—and not taken out to subsidize another agency. With one exception, our bridges are not located on interstate highways. They were built and are operated for local needs. The Bridge Authority is regionally run and governed because it serves local and regional purposes. Compare this to the New York State Thruway system that links Niagara Falls to the City of New York and connects all of our major cities. The Thruway, unlike almost all of our bridges, is an integral part of the Interstate Highway System.

Should this ill-thought merger go through and the Bridge Authority is eliminated, the benefits and efficiencies currently enjoyed by Hudson Valley residents will be lost. Given the Thruway Authority's record, there will almost certainly be an increase in tolls and a decline in the condition of a critical part of the region's infrastructure.

For the reasons stated above, we are united in our opposition to the proposed merger and urge you to remove the proposal when you advance your 30-day proposed budget amendments.

Thank you for your attention to this matter on behalf of those we serve.



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cc: Senators Elizabeth Krueger, Leroy Comrie, Timothy Kennedy  
Assemblymembers Helene Weinstein, Amy Paulin, William B. Magnarelli  
Lou Ann Ciccone