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Investment needed to maintain and expand the NYS Thruway; ACEC New York supports mission of Thruway Authority

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Albany, NY With Hurricane Florence just behind us, and our neighbors in the Carolinas and surrounding areas still feeling its effects, we are reminded of the importance of updating and maintaining infrastructure.

Building the National Highway System more than 50 years ago was an incredible accomplishment for its time. It provided an important tool to develop this country's strong economic engine, allowing faster travel and delivery of goods in our ever-growing nation. It is up to us to maintain the system and make it safer and even more productive for generations to come.

The New York State Thruway Authority maintains an important part of the National Highway System – the New York State Thruway. The authority uses toll revenue to maintain the thruway's roadways and bridges and provides needed improvements, such as E-ZPass, additional travel lanes where the roadway is being used heavily by daily commuter traffic, and technology upgrades, including traffic cameras, Highway Information Radio and TRANSalerts.

The American Council of Engineering Companies of New York (ACEC New York) supports the mission of the Thruway Authority. ACEC New York also supports the required and very necessary additional investments needed to maintain and upgrade this vital roadway. Whether it is through additional state or federal funds, public/private partnerships, increased tolls, or other revenue streams, we need to support the authority's mission. The New York State Thruway Authority is a user-fee-based system. A significant portion of the tolls collected are paid by non-New Yorkers who use our roadways, and the Thruway's toll rates are among the lowest per mile in the nation. Through tolls, those who use the Thruway pay for its upkeep.

The Authority has a plan for continued improvements to the system with associated costs.

The plan requires additional revenue sources, including tolls, to maintain the planned pace of its capital and maintenance improvements. If the revenues are not increased, the authority will have to delay its planned improvements. Delays to the plan will affect the quality of life for the traveling public who use the Thruway and may raise safety issues of the kind we all witnessed on the Thruway at the Schoharie Creek in 1987, Minnesota in 2007 and in Washington State in 2013.

We need a Thruway that continues to be an economic catalyst and supports our quality of life.

Neglecting this resource will result in the need to spend even more money in the future. The old adage – an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure – has never been truer than when it applies to our infrastructure.

ACEC New York is a proactive coalition of 270 firms representing every discipline of engineering related to the built environment—civil, structural, mechanical, electrical, environmental, geotechnical—and affiliated companies. Our shared goals are to further the business interests of our membership, enhance the quality and safety of the environment we live and work in, and help ensure the vitality of our communities. For more information, visit www.acecny.org.

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