

City of Auburn, New York

City of Auburn, New York  
February 9, 2016  
NYCOM Winter Legislative Conference  
Albany, NY



On February 9, 2016 Councilor Debra McCormick, Councilor Jimmy Giannettino and Councilor Dia Carabajal met with State Senator John DeFrancisco (50th District); State Senator Michael Nozzolio (54th District); and Assemblyman Gary Finch to discuss how the 2016 NYS Executive's proposed State budget will impact the City of Auburn. The following represents an outline of State Budget topics that were discussed in the meetings.

1. The City of Auburn takes seriously the concept of the State Property Tax Cap and recommends that a true 2% cap be used. The cap that is tied to the rate of inflation, which this year is .12%, is unreasonable and will only allow the City of Auburn to raise an additional \$15,000.00 through property taxes. Our City's long term financial plan forecasts 2.5% annual growth in expenditures. We urge the state legislature to make the property tax cap a true 2% cap, not one that can fall with inflation. If the true 2% cap is not to be established then we support the proposal of the New York Conference of Mayors (NYCOM) to establish the creation of an additional program that would allocate new unrestricted aid to local governments known as Tax Cap Equalization Aid. A couple other things to consider for the tax cap:

A. Exemption of capital projects such has been adopted for school districts and BOCES districts.

B. The property tax cap calculations are such that PILOTs have a negative impact on the cap. This is particularly harmful to school districts because it is harder for them to override the tax cap. There should be a fix so that municipalities can consider the full value of properties in PILOTs.

2. Increase unrestricted aid (formerly State Revenue Sharing). In 2011 the City of Auburn's Aid & Incentive to Municipalities (AIM) funding was cut and has been held flat ever since. This is the most direct way the state can assist localities with addressing local infrastructure needs. AIM funding should be restored to pre-2011 levels. During the City of Auburn budget year 7/1/10-6/30/11 AIM funding was \$5,311,542, it was then cut and every year since then the City has received \$4,982,093.

3. Increased reimbursement for maintenance of state arterial roads.

A. Current reimbursement rate for cities with arterial maintenance agreements of \$0.85/sq yd was established in 1987.

B. Although costs for fuel, equipment, labor, road salt and maintenance supplies has increased since 1987 there has been no adjustment in reimbursement rates.

C. City supports NYCOM effort to increase reimbursement rate to \$1.80/sq yd.

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D. Change would cost state an estimated \$11.8 million/year in addition to current reimbursements, but still represents a savings for the state if it had to fully maintain these roadways.

NYCOM Proposal to Increase Arterial Maintenance Reimbursement Rate

Annual Rate Since '86-87 Total Reimbursement @ \$.85/yard

Proposed increase Total Reimbursement @ \$1.80/yard

The impact of this for Auburn's 197,225 square yards of road maintenance would be a \$187,364. increase (current funding is \$167,642, proposed funding would be \$355,006)

4. This year local governments received an additional \$50 million for "Extreme Winter Recovery" to help municipalities pay for the damage to local roads brought on by snow, ice and cold temperatures last winter. While our current winter has been mild we are still recovering from the extreme winters of 2014 & 2015. We encourage the restoration of Extreme Winter Recovery funds or take the \$50 million and increase the Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS).

5. We support the Executive's Budget proposal for a \$21 billion DOT five-year capital plan to upgrade critical roads, bridges and other vital transportation infrastructure throughout the State, especially upstate. We urge support of The BRIDGE NY (\$1 billion), PAVE NY (\$1 billion) and the Extreme Weather Infrastructure Hardening Program (\$500 million). We further encourage that these funds be distributed proportionately throughout the State so that each locality will receive their necessary share.

6. We support the Executive's Budget proposal for a \$100 million Downtown Revitalization Program, however, REDC districts should be able to allocate the funds to multiple City downtown projects not just those in 1 City's downtown.

7. We support the Executive's Budget proposal for the Expand Tourism Investment Proposal. The City of Auburn is the future home of the Harriet Tubman National Historical Park, the agreement with the National Park Service is expected to become official by spring of 2016 and the establishment of the Tubman park will be one more highlight of New York's many tourism offerings.

8. We support the Executive's Budget proposal for the Protect Critical Infrastructure program. This is critical to enhancing public safety for localities.

9. Another recommendation we offer today is that New York needs to reform and streamline the approval process for infrastructure projects and consider adopting Public-Private Partnership (aka 'P3') legislation so that 'P3' is the standard for all Cities in NY State. The State has opened the door with the Tappan Zee Bridge Replacement Project and the Goethals Bridge Replacement project that utilized 'P3' to design, build, finance and maintain the infrastructure project. NYS is behind 33 other States of the Union that have already adopted 'P3' legislation. As Cities become more likely to bump up against their constitutional debt limit, it makes a great deal of sense to transfer the risk and financial responsibilities to the private sector. We urge you to consider this public-private partnership model for addressing aging infrastructure in our NY Cities.