



MARCH 2011 *Local Government Council*

The Region's Mighty Waterways

By Kimberly G. Finnigan, Esq.
Cooper Erving & Savage, LLP

Congressman Paul Tonko, 21st District, and John Cronin, Director and CEO of the Beacon Institute for Rivers and Estuaries, joined the Local Government Council on February 22, 2011, to discuss the regional economic development strategy for New York's waterways. In opening, Congressman Tonko stated, "Rivers are the ink that wrote our history."

Acknowledging that in the past waterfront development was "hit and miss," Tonko outlined his Mighty Waters Initiative. In July 2010, Tonko hosted the first Mighty Waters Conference, which focused on promoting sustainable and responsible waterfront development projects as a means to improve the quality of life in communities along the Hudson and Mohawk Rivers and Erie Canal. This conference sparked the creation of a task force to submit further recommendations to Congressman Tonko about how he could use his office to: (1) assure

that federal agencies and resources are used more effectively to benefit the region; (2) attract additional federal resources where necessary; and (3) galvanize local and regional interest in waterway-related projects and policies.

The Mighty Waters Task Force includes six committees: Environmental Quality and Infrastructure; Recreation, Historic and Cultural Resources; Education and Research; Economic Development; Regional Identity and Communications; and Government and Policy. The mission of the Task Force is to help create a climate of investment, recovery, and public awareness for the waterways and communities of the upper Hudson and Mohawk Rivers, Erie Canal, and related waterways by mobilizing federal resources that encourage policy reform, economic development, public access and enjoyment, and effective environmental and cultural >>

Power for Jobs Replacement Approved

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The New York State Senate unanimously passed Governor Andrew Cuomo's plan, called "Recharge New York," which would replace the Power for Jobs program. The plan will provide continued discounted energy costs for manufacturers and nonprofits and offers contracts lasting up to seven years. The bill is currently in the Assembly and likely will face opposition in its current form from Assembly Democrats and AARP. □

The Local Government Council (LGC) was founded in 1997 to give local government leaders a forum to identify issues of importance to municipalities, to discuss opportunities for regional cooperation and to foster working relationships among local leaders.



Co-Chair
Gerald D. Jennings
Mayor of Albany



Co-Chair
Kathleen M. Jimino
Rensselaer County
Executive

March 22nd 2011 | 11:30am – 1:15pm

Deidre Scozzafava, Deputy Director for Local Government at the NYS Dept. of State Local Government
United Way of the Greater Capital Region, Albany

April 26th 2011 | 11:30am – 1:15pm

United Way of the Greater Capital Region, Albany

New Membership

Membership ensures CEG has the funding to continue to staff the Local Government Council with topics and presenters that engage and educate the members on key issues, in addition to supporting continued regional growth activities in the 11-county region.

To join, contact Rosalind Harris, at rosalindh@ceg.org or (518) 465 – 8975 x222



Mighty Waterways Cont'd

resource management. John Cronin chairs the Task Force.

Congressman Tonko is currently conducting a listening tour to solicit feedback and recommendations from constituencies and stakeholders. Tonko's goal is to maintain open and substantive dialogue among all partners as the Task Force strives to promote, protect, and enhance the myriad of communities tied to the region's waterways.

"Our time has more than come," said Congressman Tonko. "It's time to speak as a region and put our strength together instead of competing with each other for funding." Mr. Cronin noted that in so doing, the region will become a higher priority for federal agencies.

Mr. Cronin identified a substantial obstacle for the region: waterways are a significant and obvious sense of our regional identity, but most people think the Hudson River only exists south of Columbia County. Mr. Cronin is working to change that thinking and to emphasize connectivity between urban and rural waterways. He is focusing his efforts on collaboration between federal agencies such as the Department of the Interior, Army Corps of Engineers, HUD, and the Environmental Protection Agency.

Mr. Cronin explained that one of the major difficulties when developing waterfront is knowing what is allowed. Most planning is reactive rather than proactive – federal and state regulations offer a lot of guidance on what we cannot do and very little on what we

can. One of the Task Force's main priorities is to amend and/or create regulations in order to incorporate our region's priorities and vision. Other action items and considerations include: (1) identifying brownfields; (2) inventorying and evaluating local waterfront-related infrastructure and prioritizing projects where funding for infrastructure maintenance or upgrades would be most beneficial to improve the region's economic competitiveness; (3) promoting heritage tourism as economic development; and (4) evaluating/drafting rules and regulations that may enhance waterfront and boater access.



(Left to Right) Albany County Executive, Michael Breslin, Congressman Paul Tonko and Katherine Pelham, United Way CEO

Both Congressman Tonko and Mr. Cronin encouraged local government officials to help, educate, inform, and sensitize the Task Force to the waterfront development issues their communities are facing. After all, explained Tonko, success for even one town, one village, or one city will trickle into the region. The Second Annual Mighty Waters Conference will be held June 8, 2011 at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. □

Mandate Relief Not Gaining Enough Attention

Governor Cuomo's Medicaid committee recently received strong praise for its production of 79 proposals that would save the state billions. Not so for the Mandate Relief committee. The committee did not provide a single proposal to be included in the Governor's budget, which is already before the Legislature. The mandate issue has been around for decades and, the Administration argues, cannot be fixed in a day. The committee did call for an amendment to the Constitution to prohibit new unfunded mandates and outlined a process to review existing mandates over the next few months. □

Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA) Bringing BusPlus Service to the Capital Region

Starting April 4th, the Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA) will roll out BusPlus service on Route 5 between Schenectady and Albany. BusPlus, aka Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) will have 18 designated stops at BusPlus stations, resulting in an 80% reduction in stops. The cost for BusPlus service will be slightly higher, but riders will have the option of choosing between BRT with fewer stops, and Local service. Plans are underway to add real time GPS updates to each BusPlus station by June & off board collection boxes will be added within the next 12-18 months. CDTA is also working on upgrading their cell phone app to real time. CDTA is only the second mass transit agency in New York State to offer Bus Rapid Transit service. □