

ULSTER COUNTY OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER

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March Gallagher's Statement on New York State Comptroller's Report on The Condition of Local Owned Bridges in New York State

In [a report issued today, the NYS Comptroller identified](#) that Ulster County has more bridges in poor condition than *any other* county in New York State. As the Ulster County Comptroller, I feel it imperative to bring to the attention of elected policy leaders and the public that Ulster County must better prioritize bridge repair and replacement. While we have a number of bridge capital projects authorized and underway, these projects must receive higher priority going forward.

Of Ulster County's 391 bridges, 21% (or 81 bridges) are in poor condition, 58% (229) are in fair condition, and only 21% (81) are in good condition. The report contained data indicating that 45 of the 156 county-owned bridges (29%) are poor condition, 18 of the 90 local-owned bridges (20%) are poor condition and 18 of the 145 state-owned bridges (12%) are poor condition. These numbers are in stark contrast to bridges in other counties across New York State.

Percentage of Bridges in Poor Condition		
Owner	Ulster County Bridges	New York State Bridges
County	29%	3%
State	12%	4%
Local	20%	2%

The high percentage of county-owned bridges in poor condition is not for lack of financial resources, but instead lack of prioritization. Ulster County has enjoyed greater than normal revenues over the last several years including sales tax as well as the additional receipt of one-time American Rescue Plan Act funds. Ulster County's audited financials for 2023 are projected to show a fund balance of over \$170 million in our General Fund, although delayed financial reporting caused by financial management turnover means that we do not yet have that number definitively. Delays in financial reporting make commitment of funds to projects like bridge replacement and repair more challenging for policy makers. Furthermore, a higher percentage of state and locally-owned bridges in Ulster County are designated as poor condition than other counties.

Bridges are the connective tissue among our communities, giving residents access to jobs, schools, and healthcare. While I applaud investments in the Rondout Creek (Wurts Street) Bridge that recently had a pomp and circumstance ribbon cutting, we cannot let the headlines drive our capital projects investment. Routine maintenance may not be newsworthy, but it is absolutely necessary. We simply must better prioritize this critical infrastructure.

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