

**For Immediate Release:**  
January 25, 2005

**Contact: Steve Stallmer**  
(518) 456-1134

### **AGC Calls Pataki Transportation Budget ‘Deplorable’**

AJ Castelbuono, President & CEO of the Associated General Contractors, New York State Chapter, Inc. testified today before the Senate and Assembly joint legislative hearing on Governor Pataki’s proposed 2005-06 Transportation Budget.

“The Governor proposed a stagnant program with absolutely NO growth over the 5-year period. When factoring in the cost of inflation, it actually equates to a cut in funding,” Castelbuono stated.

Once again, the Pataki administration has proposed raiding the *Dedicated Highway and Bridge Trust Fund* of nearly \$550 million for expenses previously covered by the General Fund, like snow plowing, bus inspections and Department of Motor Vehicle expenses. The state has raided the *Trust Fund* so egregiously that **less than 10 cents of every dollar** that New York drivers are paying in highway user fees are going back into road and bridge construction.

Governor Pataki also recommends extending the payback terms of current transportation bonds. The state pays over a billion dollars of interest on these bonds already. He further demonstrates his fiscal irresponsibility by offering a phantom \$2 billion increase in the capital program in the final two years without any details to support it. “The Governor is playing a dangerous game of smoke and mirrors with our transportation finances and his proposal should be rejected,” said Castelbuono.

Citing a recent study by The Road Information Program (TRIP), Castelbuono noted that New York earned a grade of C minus for its road and bridge conditions. “With over one-third of our roads in poor or mediocre condition and 37% of our bridges in substandard condition, our infrastructure is clearly failing,” he continued.

This budget completely ignores the findings and recommendations of the Governor’s own *Advisory Panel on Transportation Policy for 2025*. In December, the panel concluded that New York’s transportation network required tens of billions of dollars of investments in the next five years alone. Without such funding, the panel warned, “the infrastructure will deteriorate, the economy will falter, jobs will be lost and the quality of life in New York State will suffer dramatically.”

“The advisory panel sent Mr. Pataki a clear wake-up call and he hit the snooze button,” Castelbuono concluded.

Founded in 1926, the New York State Chapter, Inc., Associated General Contractors is the largest statewide highway construction organization in New York.