

Monroe County Executive Adam J. Bello

State of Infrastructure

Good Afternoon and thank you for joining me for the final address comprising the 2024 State of Monroe County. I've already presented three of the four pillars of my administration: Public health, public safety and economic and workforce development. Today, from the Frederick Douglass Greater Rochester International Airport, I am delivering the 2024 State of our Infrastructure.

Much like the first three pillars, modernized and inclusive infrastructure is fundamental for a healthy, safe, prosperous and sustainable society. It is literally the physical foundation and system on which our society is built, we rely on our network of infrastructure to connect with critical services for health and safety, to improve our quality of life, and to enhance our access to activities and entertainment.

We are focused on modernizing and employing new technology to better serve our residents.

When you think of infrastructure, you should envision the many connected features that make up our community - roads, bridges, parks, the airport, housing and buildings.

But our infrastructure is also the critical foundation of facilities, services, and systems we either cannot see or seldom think about day to day.

Sewers, water treatment, traffic signals, culverts, and broadband are examples of infrastructure that are taken for granted unless

something goes wrong—which is not often—thanks to our Department of Environmental Services, Department of Transportation, and our team here in the Department of Aviation.

SOTC – Airport projects and impact

The ROC airport is truly a gem, in fact the Frederick Douglass Greater Rochester International Airport was named one of the 10 best small airports in the country by USA Today Readers' Choice.

Last year, more than 2.6 million individuals traveled through the airport. That's 2.6 million people whose first or last impression was made right here.

This is a gateway for businesses considering relocation, for families vacationing and enjoying our history, culture, parks, festivals and amenities, for job seekers interviewing at local businesses - the first impression of our community is the moment they step off the plane.

A large portion of the airport was renovated in 2018, but there was still significant work to be done.

Soon after I took office, I worked with the Airport team to start an aggressive effort to finish the terminal modernization project.

New York State is supporting that plan with more than \$18 million in grant funding. As you can see, and likely hear, that construction work is well underway.

These projects encompass much of the airport – from parking, to passenger pick up and drop off, to dining options and amenities, to walking the jetway and into the airplane cabin. Taken together, these improvements will help ensure we keep our standing as a

top ten small airport by providing passengers and visitors with the highest quality travel experience.

Once construction is complete, airport customers will see:

A parking guidance system, lighted indicators will help guide passengers to available spots within the parking garage. If you've been to Disney Springs in Orlando, you know how helpful this system can be!

An extension of the canopy over the walking path from short term parking to the terminal and over the sidewalk to the car rental area. This will protect passengers and visitors from the weather when entering and exiting the terminal. The canopy additions will also connect to the current rainwater collection system, furthering the airport's commitment to sustainable initiatives.

Larger, more energy-efficient vestibules and doorways along with wider and deeper elevators allow for better wheelchair accessibility and more room for bags of traveling passengers.

A faster, more efficient passenger baggage system to speed-up both luggage for pick up after a flight and for loading luggage to departing flights.

A renovated Veterans Area to feature updated display cases, interactive displays, and new memorials to our region's veterans. This area is used as a gathering place for veterans traveling out of the airport, and is a central to our Honor Flight Rochester missions.

The updated RocAirport.com is now more mobile friendly to provide easier navigation and an interactive terminal map. The

website also links to food vendors allowing travelers to order ahead, so your lunch can be ready and waiting when you arrive.

Finally, we will complete the Frederick Douglass Legacy Commemoration Project, with exhibits highlighting the life and legacy of Frederick Douglass, for whom the airport was named in 2021.

The local economy also benefits from the airport renovation project. The \$32 million project created 75 jobs for construction and design work. The construction work is being performed under Project Labor Agreement with a focus on employing local labor.

These improvements are being noticed by airlines, which consider the quality and usage of an airport when deciding locations to expand their service.

Recently, several new airlines began service from Rochester, and some expanded their routes to sought-after destinations.

Avelo Airlines began air service last year with nonstop flights to Raleigh/Durham, NC and expanded its service with nonstop flights to Greenville/Spartanburg, South Carolina.

Spirit Airlines is adding a daily nonstop service to Fort Lauderdale in August to provide further connectivity to Caribbean destinations and direct access to popular cruise harbors. This is a big win for us as Fort Lauderdale is one of our top unserved markets.

Southwest Airlines is adding nonstop service four times per week to Las Vegas starting in October. It's the first nonstop service to Las Vegas from Rochester since 2008 and the farthest western nonstop destination out of Rochester.

This is another major win as Southwest just left the Syracuse Airport completely – choosing to add new flights and destinations from Rochester.

UPCOMING PROJECTS - \$\$ INVESTED, PLAs, WORKFORCE

The airport is only one example of numerous ongoing and upcoming construction projects that will boost our economy and create jobs.

Our ongoing projects include \$123 Million in planning, design, and construction costs for:

- Upgrades to mechanical treatment and electrical infrastructure at the VanLare Water Treatment Plant
- Construction of new facilities and program space at the CDC
- Renovations at City Place
- And Innovative Field MLB upgrades and patron improvements

Innovative Field is Infrastructure - but the Red Wings are also an employer with 538 part time and 40 full time employees, activating and enriching our downtown.

And these investments ensure our Red Wings keep playing in Downtown Rochester.

And I know the 36,914 fans who came to Innovative Field over a three game stretch last week had a great experience. That is record setting attendance that we have not seen since the inaugural season at Innovative Field in 1997.

We are grateful to the Red Wings for all they do for our community, and of course the face of the Red Wings - Naomi Silver - thank you for your constant support and partnership.

Again that's \$123 Million in projects already underway but on the horizon we also have:

- The Seneca Park Zoo Tropic and front entry project
- The new Applied Technology Center and Optics program space at MCC Brighton
- New Generators at the VanLare Water Treatment Plant
- Mechanical and electrical upgrades to the NW Quadrant Water Resource Recovery Facility
- The Genesee Valley Pump Station and Forcemain project which will build sewer capacity and allow for URMCS massive emergency room expansion.
- And upgrades to County buildings including mechanical, electrical, HVAC, and elevator replacements.

That's \$280 million in upcoming investments supporting planning, design and construction.

All told, that's more than \$400 million in investments that directly enhances local resident's quality of life and supports local businesses.

I'm pleased to share the County has six signed Project Labor Agreements (PLAs) for projects at

- VanLare Water Treatment Plant
- Innovative Field
- The CDC
- Seneca Park Zoo

- MCC's Applied Technology Center and
- Here at the Airport.

PLAs save tax-payers dollars and ensure on-time, high quality results, and we have been able to use PLAs to leverage investments in pre-apprenticeship programs, from these 6 PLAs a total of \$159,000 has gone to Rochester Careers in Construction to help build our next generation of skilled workers in high paying jobs that are crucial for our local economy.

In addition to PLAs the County is supporting apprenticeship pilot programs. We have already completed two apprenticeship pilots on DOT projects and each met their goal of ensuring 10% of the workforce were apprentices.

Three new apprenticeship pilots will be included for projects at City Place, the Genesee Valley Pump Station, and at the County Office Building for HVAC upgrades.

Multimodal

A focus on innovation is critical as we explore future infrastructure projects, and our next big project could be multimodal infrastructure - which would significantly change how we accept and move freight.

We have a problem - goods and products destined for our community are being driven through Rochester to shipping hubs in Syracuse or Buffalo, only to be put on another truck, and driven back to Rochester. This is a big miss for our area's economy that needs to be addressed.

Given Monroe County's history of large manufacturing companies - the movement of freight has always been an important factor in our region.

As early as 2001 RGRTA commissioned a study - it noted air freight would be a transit mode of the future and identified a need for rail to truck transloading facilities, in 2002 a private study focused on transforming Monroe County into a major multimodal international gateway, but nothing materialized from these studies.

My administration has made the safe and effective movement of freight in Monroe County a priority. With the support of the Monroe County Legislature, the county retained a consultant to review the past reports interview stakeholders to make assessments based on the current landscape of business in the County.

Stakeholders identified freight-related challenges including: the need to work with Class 1 freight railroads; the need for cold storage facilities; congestion; location-issues; outdated or inadequate infrastructure.

The previous attempts to create a multimodal freight solution centered around a single, large facility. This approach was an all-or-none option, and given the size and costs of one large facility, a project was never able to get off the ground.

Our consultant found this approach didn't adequately address the needs for Monroe County, and we would be better served by re-envisioning multimodal freight transit through a cluster approach. In doing so, we will have an opportunity to make incremental

investments for immediate benefit and use them to leverage private investment as well as state and federal dollars.

Initial feedback supports the creation of three unique development clusters each focusing on a different primary mode of freight transit – air, rail and trucking.

For example, a proposed development cluster at the airport could start with smart warehousing facilities and small load trucking operations to provide air cargo services for existing business needs. This approach could grow and develop over time with the goal of diverting freight from congested east coast airports.

Another cluster focused on trucking, with the a goal of developing a one-stop shop for truck drivers in order to eliminate backtracking to multiple facilities. This would increase efficiency, and the reliability of shipping. This cluster could further develop to include cold storage and other facilities to support freight transit.

Finally, a third cluster would focus on rail shipments. This would develop underutilized land and facilities surrounding Eastman Business Park. This space could support larger freight railways and smaller, more local rail connections. The site could also develop and expand electric charging infrastructure for a new generation of electric locomotives and trucks.

These clusters would each provide their own specific benefits, but also complement each other. My primary goal is to maximize our investments in freight infrastructure to benefit the business and industries that call Monroe County home. Secondarily, we will

look to leverage these investments into supporting the efficient movement of freight to provide additional value.

Countywide Active Transportation Plan

Infrastructure plays a role in commerce, but our infrastructure also plays a significant role in quality of life, sustainability, and safety.

The Countywide Active Transportation Plan marks a significant step toward a vision for enhancing active transportation infrastructure across the county, building a safer environment, reducing congestion, and contributing to a more sustainable future.

The Active Transportation Plan is the result of collaboration between Monroe County and the Genesee Transportation Council that engaged the public and stakeholders.

The Plan is shaping transportation improvement projects, enhancing safety, connectivity and transit access and strengthening the County's ability to procure funding for transformative projects.

Regardless of physical ability or mode of transportation everyone should be able to travel safely and securely. The county's pedestrian, bicycle, and transit networks connect many communities and provide access to places our residents need to go.

Achieving this vision requires us to take a hard look at our transportation infrastructure, identify areas for improvement and take decisive action.

Sidewalks

Sidewalks play a pivotal role in our Active Transportation Plan by creating a pedestrian-friendly environment, encouraging physical activity and fostering a sense of community.

Last summer, I announced an initiative to increase the number of sidewalks around the County. I committed Monroe County to funding half the costs of new sidewalks installed along county roads.

Previously, municipalities had to bear the full cost of sidewalk installation.

Perinton was the first community to participate, with a plan to install new sidewalks along Aldrich Road.

Today, I'm pleased to announce that sidewalk initiatives are being developed in five other communities, creating a total of five miles of new sidewalks along portions of Mile Square Road in Mendon; West Avenue in Brockport; Tobey Road in Pittsford; parts of Plank, Jackson and Five Mile Line roads in Penfield; and Gilman Rd. in Riga.

We look forward to partnering with additional towns to increase the number of sidewalks across our community.

Bike Lanes

An active transportation network also requires bike lanes. Last year, in collaboration with Brighton Town Supervisor Bill Moehle and his Public Works Department, county DOT installed bike lanes along Elmwood Avenue from South Goodman Street to Hollywood Ave. near Twelve Corners. This project aimed to enhance connectivity throughout Brighton, and make it safer for

kids, parents and anyone who bikes or walks along Elmwood Avenue.

This year, we will be installing 4 centerline miles of additional bike lanes on sections of three county roads:

- Brighton Henrietta Town Line Road in the Town of Brighton
- Long Pond Road in Gates
- And, along East Ridge Road in Irondequoit

General DOT Projects:

Developing new sidewalks and bike lanes must be done in tandem with ongoing investments in our roads and bridges.

This year thanks to the support of Governor Hochul the Department of Transportation will engage in \$11.8 million of ongoing and routine maintenance on county roads - this includes milling and resurfacing, chip sealing, and other repairs.

In addition our capital program will include:

- \$14.4 million in highway milling and resurfacing covering 15.8 lane miles;
- \$19.5 million in highway rehabilitation covering 7.4 lanes miles
- 5 culvert replacements totaling \$5.3 million
- And we will invest \$12.2 million to replace 6 bridges and \$2.2 million to rehabilitate another bridge.

In total we will invest \$65.4 million in maintenance, rehabilitation, and replacements to our county's roads, bridges, and culverts.

Wi-Fi/Fiber Connection of traffic signals

Unlike our roads and bridges, much of our infrastructure goes unnoticed day to day. But next time you're driving, you might see one of these near a traffic light:

It's a wireless connection to the James R. Pond Regional Traffic Operations Center on Scottsville Road and one more way Monroe County is modernizing infrastructure and systems to better serve the public.

Through the state-of-the-art Regional Traffic Operations Center, the Monroe County Department of Transportation monitors traffic flow and remotely controls more than 500 traffic signals and 186 traffic cameras.

When there are backups, crashes, congestion or bad weather, staff at RTOC can see those problems on the cameras and adjust the timing patterns of traffic lights along city and county roads and major state highways to help get cars moving smoothly again.

For example, following the eclipse earlier this year, the lights along Lake Avenue flashed green for those leaving Ontario Beach Park. This made leaving the park a smooth and orderly process and far less aggravating than waiting at multiple red lights.

Nearly 20% of traffic lights are not on the remote system yet because they are too far from the fiber network. These wireless devices allow us to connect these remaining lights to the system.

Late last year, MCDOT started a three-year project aimed at connecting every one of the 649 traffic signals it oversees to the centralized system.

By embracing innovative solutions like wireless connectivity for our traffic signals, we are not just modernizing our infrastructure—we are paving the way for a safer, more efficient Monroe County.

Broadband:

The County has an impressive broadband network that is a selling point to businesses and keeps our community safe and connected,

Yet there are still pockets in our city and more rural parts of our county without access to a high-speed broadband connection.

The importance of high speed, reliable internet has been compared to access to other utilities such as electricity and water—and with good reason.

The internet is essential to our everyday lives – for education, job searches, remote work meetings, telehealth visits, entertainment, starting small businesses and more.

U.S. Census data shows nearly two out of every 10 city households and three out of every 10 rural households don't have internet subscriptions – and many more people depend solely on smartphone plans. It is essential that all of our residents have equitable opportunities to access high-speed affordable internet.

To address this need, last year we convened the bi-partisan Monroe County Advisory Taskforce on Broadband and hired Magellan Advisors to conduct a study assessing internet services in low income and rural areas of the county.

Thanks to the hard work of our County Law Department and our Department of Planning, I am announcing today that the county

has signed a \$4.2 million contract with Community Broadband Networks to construct a high speed, low-cost wireless internet service to provide internet access to eligible residents and to unserved and underserved business locations in the city of Rochester.

The new wireless service will provide 100 megabits per second to more than 6,000 customers in the City's most distressed zip codes. We have ensured that this fixed wireless service will cost no more than \$30/month, and is price locked for at least five (5) years.

At the same time we are addressing needs in underserved rural areas that lack access to high speed internet. We are currently finalizing a grant for up to \$1.8 million to expand Spectrum Internet access to households in Hamlin, Clarkson, Sweden, Parma, Riga, Wheatland, Ogden, Rush, Mendon, and Penfield.

This will directly fund the installation of wired connections – that have been cost prohibitive for the service provider and would not be completed without this partnership.

Once these properties are connected, homeowners and businesses in the impacted region will have access to previously inaccessible high speed internet services. Services will be available to new customers at the same cost as those located in Spectrum's current service area.

The investment in our broadband infrastructure removes a barrier that was holding back many of our residents from fully participating in our county's economic, educational and civic

opportunities. It's another example of investing ARPA dollars for projects that are truly transformational for our county.

Landbank

I'm pleased to announce another ARPA investment that will launch later this summer when we constitute the Monroe County Landbank.

As Town Supervisor in Irondequoit one of the biggest issues I faced that impacted our neighborhoods was blight and safety concerns around vacant and abandoned properties. At the time towns had limited tools to address these zombie properties, but we engaged in new and innovative approaches that began to remove some of these problem properties.

As County Clerk I continued my efforts to address these long-standing issues by creating a zombie property task force, and two years ago we launched the Monroe County Vacant Property Resource Hub.

Today I am announcing a new tool that will address problem properties, with a \$1M initial investment in the Monroe County Landbank. The Landbank will allow Monroe County to acquire properties, partner with agencies and developers to rehab and resell them to first time homebuyers. The landbank will also, assist with the demolition of dilapidated structures and eliminate potential health hazards in neighborhoods.

Housing is a critical piece of our community's infrastructure, and we are making significant investments in affordable housing options. Earlier this month we shared our efforts to bring developers, housing stakeholders, and government leaders

together for an affordable housing roundtable, and our programmatic efforts to support housing search navigators, landlord tenant mediation, and efforts to incentivize landlords to bring more rentals online.

Parks: Go Outside Monroe

It is critical that our infrastructure support safe, walkable and vibrant communities from our housing to the amenities we use each day for entertainment and enjoyment.

In Monroe County one of our strongest community assets is our robust and diverse park system. 23 County parks, in addition to numerous city, town, and village parks, provide recreational activities for residents of all ages and abilities.

Through the Go Outside Monroe initiative I have committed to making our parks more welcoming, inclusive, and activity centered to support a thriving and healthy community.

The focus of the Go Outside Monroe Initiative is to invigorate our park system through a series of projects that renovate and upgrade facilities and add new amenities throughout the county's park system. When we complete phase 2, we will have invested an additional \$16.6 million in our parks.

When I first took office, the Monroe County Parks system needed repair, renovation, and investment. The shelters were outdated and lacked consistent maintenance, many roads and parking lots needed repaving, access paths were eroded, tennis courts and playgrounds needed repair or replacement and the golf courses lacked proper drainage and other improvements. Overall, our parks lacked the updated amenities our residents wanted and deserved.

Phase one of Go Outside Monroe tackled the immediate repairs and renovations needed to shelters, structures, roads and drainage. Phase two is adding new shelters and amenities such as pickleball courts, dog parks, playgrounds and golf course improvements including new cart paths

To date, we have completed:

- Restroom renovations throughout the parks system.
- Eight new pickleball courts in multiple parks.
- The Highland Park underground electric project, which better supports festivals by adding accessible power sources to the park.
- A new playground at Powdermills park
- The new Knollwood Lodge at Northampton Park
- A new Dog Park in Webster
- Repairs and renovations at the Roger Robach Center

Last week, we cut the ribbon on two outstanding additions to Ontario Beach Park: Monroe County's first Inclusive playground and our first spray park also with accessible features.

The playground has ramps, a rubberized material floor for easy wheelchair navigation, an inclusive see-saw, and a whirl feature which allows children and families to play together—no matter their age or ability.

The spray park gives families another free option to cool off on days when the beach isn't open because lake conditions prevent swimming.

The investments in our parks are intentionally designed to be inclusive and accessible. The ADA accessible mat at Ontario Beach Park allows individuals with wheelchairs or those with mobility challenges to easily traverse to the water's edge.

The adult changing table at Knollwood Lodge and two more at the airport provide a secure, safe and respectful location to support caregivers providing toileting assistance. Adult changing tables are now part of planning for future lodge renovations.

As phase two of Go Outside Monroe continues, there are still a number of projects in the works:

- A new playground at Northampton Park adjacent to Springdale Farms, that should be completed in a few weeks
- New wood-burning stoves in many of the lodges
- A new labor center at Powder Mills Park, reconstruction of Kanantota Lodge in Webster Park, and renovations to the Carousel at Ontario Beach Park.
- The construction of an ADA accessible Canoe and Kayak Launch at Churchville Park
- And soon, the opening of the 23rd county park adjacent to the Lehigh Valley Park Trail railway in Henrietta.

Just last month, in partnership with PGA Reach, we opened the new half a million dollar Calvin Peete Pitch and Putt Practice Facility at Genesee Valley Golf Course.

Planning and design work continues for The Children's Pavilion in Highland Park and for a 9/11 Memorial at Beikirch Park. More information and updates for both projects should be coming soon.

Park infrastructure is more than lodges, amenities, playgrounds, and road improvements—it's also about the forests and canopy.

The parks department has been vigilant in removing white ash trees decimated by the Emerald Ash Borer. Ash trees make up the majority of trees in some county parks. As stewards of the park, we need to ensure we replace damaged trees with a more robust variety of healthy trees.

Today, I'm announcing a \$200,000 multi-year grant from the US Department of Agriculture Forest Service to purchase and plant up to 8,645 trees in Monroe County parks over the next three years. This is a transformational investment for our parks. Our parks department usually plants about 300 trees each year.

A special thanks to the Monroe County Soil & Water Conservation District for working with our parks department to secure and administer the grant. Their foresight and partnership is greatly appreciated.

The first installation of trees was this spring, and a second planting will occur this fall. The more than 8,500 trees in this grant will be planted by fall of 2026.

As we continue to invest in and modernize our infrastructure, we are building a Monroe County that is not only more efficient and resilient, but also more equitable and connected.

Whether it's the enhanced travel experience at our top-rated airport, seamless connectivity provided by our broadband initiatives, the safer, more accessible pathways created through our Active Transportation Plan, the major investments in our parks system, or strategic development of our multimodal freight

infrastructure, every effort is aimed at expanding opportunity and elevating the quality of life for our entire community.

We are a community where innovation drives progress, where inclusivity is a core value. We are a county where infrastructure meets the needs of today while anticipating the challenges of tomorrow.

Thank you all for being part of this journey.

Together, we are paving the way for a brighter, more connected and prosperous future.