

House Republican Press Release

January 30, 2009
Press Office: 860-240-8700

Reps Harkins, Miller; Sen. Debicella Hail Bond Commission Okay of Moses Wheeler Bridge Replacement Funding



\$20 Million Allocation would Pay for Installation of Foundations for First Phase of Project

State Representatives John A. Harkins and Lawrence G. Miller, and state Senator Dan Debicella today hailed approval by the State Bond Commission of a \$20 million allocation that will pay for construction of foundations to

support a new Moses Wheeler Bridge over the Housatonic River between Stratford and Milford.

The bond commission approved the funding at its regular monthly meeting Friday.

“The Moses Wheeler Bridge is over 50 years old and has been deteriorating for years,” said Representative Harkins, R-120th District. “Replacing the bridge is critical to the safety of both Stratford residents and commuters. I commend Governor Rell for making this project one of her priorities for funding under her \$525 million Connecticut Stimulus Package, and the Bond Commission for approving the allocation. I will continue to work closely with state Department of Transportation officials and my legislative colleagues in the Greater Stratford-Milford area to ensure this important project is completed on time and with the least amount of disturbance to residents who live near the site.”

“I applaud Governor Rell for her commitment to ensuring the safety of area residents and commuters traveling on I-95. I fully support the Moses Wheeler bridge replacement project, and I will continue working with the Department of Transportation to ensure the project causes the least amount of disruption possible to Stratford’s Ferry Boulevard neighborhood,” said Senator Debicella, R-21st District, who held a public forum on the project in 2007. “Since then we have had several meetings with DOT officials to make sure residents’ concerns are taken into account as the project proceeds.”

“I’d like to thank Governor Rell and the bond commission for approving the funding needed to get this badly-needed project underway,” said Representative Miller, R-122nd District. “The Moses Wheeler Bridge is one of the worst in Connecticut. Chunks of concrete have been falling off the side of the bridge for about 15 years, graphically demonstrating that it has serious structural problems and is long overdue for replacement. The quicker the bridge is replaced, the safer it will be for area motorists and commuters. ”

Representative Harkins and Senator Debicella will be meeting with DOT officials over the next few weeks to review the plans and ensure residents’ concerns are addressed.

Those concerns include noise, night work, and potential adverse effects on the environment, such as building a holding pond near residents' homes.

Installation of the foundations will be the first phase of the \$390 million project. The foundation work, which is expected to cost \$57 million (including \$33 million in federal funds), is expected to get underway this summer and be completed in 2011. During the second phase of the project, a new replacement bridge will be built in three sections. Construction of the new Moses Wheeler Bridge should be completed in 2015.

The state Department of Transportation will be seeking bids for the foundation work next month. The existing bridge, which opened in 1958 with three lanes in each direction, is 3,196 feet long and has 34 spans – one of the longest in Connecticut.

“The Moses Wheeler Bridge, which carries about 112,400 vehicles a day over the Housatonic River on I-95, is one of the most heavily-traveled in the state,” Governor Rell said. “The I-95 corridor is one of our state’s most important and vital economic arteries. It is critical that this link be modernized and carefully maintained.”

The Moses Wheeler Bridge is named for one of Stratford’s earliest settlers, a shipwright who at one time in the mid-1600s operated a ferry across the Housatonic River between Stratford and Milford. He died in 1698 at the age of 100.