



COUNTY OF ORLEANS
AGRICULTURAL AND FARMLAND
PROTECTION BOARD

August 7, 2014

David B. Callard, Chairman
Orleans County Legislature
3 South Main Street, Suite 2
Albion, New York 14411

Dear Chairman Callard:

The Orleans County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board (AFPB) is aware that the County Legislature has taken a leadership role in addressing the deteriorating state of bridges in the County. Let the record show the AFPB applauds your initiative and shares your concern; as evidence, it unanimously passed a motion at last month's meeting in support of the repair and/or replacement of substandard bridges throughout the County that affect the regular movement of agricultural vehicles, machinery, equipment, inputs, and products.

As you well know, agriculture is a foundation of the County's economy and remains its primary industry. According to the last U.S. Census of Agriculture in 2012, the market value of agricultural products originating from Orleans County surpassed \$150 million. The same source placed the estimated market value of all farm machinery and equipment at over \$113 million. The Erie Canal is an example of infrastructure that can be both a benefit and potential impediment to farming. According to *New York State Canal Corporation Report on Economic Benefits of Non-Tourism Use of the NYS Canal System* (April 2014), agricultural operations – irrigation as an example - supported by the Canal generated \$45.6 million State-wide in economic impact. Yet deficient Canal bridges are increasing in number. And while the farm industry here is fully engaged in deployment of technology to improve productivity and thereby competitiveness here and abroad, there is no foreseeable substitute for an accessible and reliable road network over which to move heavy machinery and goods critical to large-scale agricultural production.

With high capital costs inherent in the business, farmers fully appreciate that the closing of a bridge or the imposition of a weight limit upon it can have substantial financial impact upon the viability of agricultural operations. It can compel them to reconsider, downscale, if not altogether forego, future investment opportunities at the very time that expansion in size and scale for particular segments of the agricultural industry is essential to continued success.

For all of the aforementioned reasons, the AFPB support stands with you in this endeavor and trusts you will find willing partners in municipal and New York State government to make bridge repair and replacement a high priority in Orleans County.

Sincerely,

Barry Flansburg, Chairman
Orleans County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Board

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