



**Press Contacts:** Caryn McBride/Veronica Roman  
Co-Communications Inc.  
914-666-0066

[cmcbride@cocommunications.com](mailto:cmcbride@cocommunications.com) /  
[vroman@cocommunications.com](mailto:vroman@cocommunications.com)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Sheriffs Voice Support for Route 17 Expansion**

*17-Forward-86 Coalition shares efforts to add a third lane  
on heavily traveled corridor in Orange, Sullivan counties*

**GOSHEN, N.Y. (Aug. 7, 2019)** – Sheriffs from the Hudson Valley are adding their support to the growing campaign to widen Route 17 east and west in Orange and Sullivan counties.

Orange County Sheriff Carl DuBois and Sullivan County Sheriff Michael Schiff met recently with representatives of 17-Forward-86, a coalition of stakeholders advocating for creating a third lane on the heavily traveled corridor.

“Our officers are understandably concerned about the worsening traffic conditions on Route 17,” said Sheriff DuBois. “As first responders, we know all too well the dangers tie-ups pose, and the difference a few minutes – even seconds – can make in a life-or-death situation.”

The meeting was organized by 17-Forward-86 co-chairs Maureen Halahan, President and CEO of the Orange County Partnership and Marc Baez, President and CEO of the Sullivan County Partnership for Economic Development.

“We are so grateful to our sheriffs for giving us the opportunity to share our message about the critical need to widen Route 17,” said Halahan.

Halahan said Sheriffs DuBois and Schiff will be discussing this with the division of New York State Police to get their input.

“The safety of our residents and visitors is our top priority,” Sheriff Schiff said. “That’s why we support this initiative to improve mobility and help to reduce risks on our roads.”

17-Forward-86 launched its campaign on March 6 at a press conference in Albany. The coalition is seeking \$500 million from New York state to add a third lane east and west on Route 17 to enable future designation as Interstate 86 in the region.

The state has since taken the next steps in the ongoing effort to improve mobility on Route 17, including studying the addition of a third lane. In May, the state Department of Transportation (DOT) issued a request for expressions of interest for an engineering firm to begin a scoping and preliminary review process. The work is part of a \$5 million Planning and Environmental Linkage study (PEL), which includes identifying priority locations and conducting environmental assessments and preliminary engineering. Funding for the PEL was committed as part of the state’s 2018-2019 budget.

“The PEL study will lay the technical groundwork to make this project a reality,” Baez said. “We’re very pleased with the progress. This sets the stage for inclusion of Route 17 capacity enhancements in the upcoming capital program.”

17-Forward-86 has been engaging state legislators to secure funding in the DOT’s multi-year capital plan to enable the implementation of recommendations contained in a [2013 capacity study issued by NYSDOT](#). Coalition members have also been meeting directly with DOT officials. The DOT’s next capital plan is expected to begin in March 2020 and will be funded by state and federal funds.

#### **About the Proposed Expansion of Route 17**

- The 2013 Route 17 Transportation Corridor Study, prompted by U.S. Sen. Chuck Schumer, found that congestion on Route 17 will worsen over time and development in the region necessitates an additional lane/added capacity.
- Projections by the Cornell Program of Applied Demographics indicate that, by 2020, Sullivan County’s population will grow to more than 79,000 and Orange County’s to more than 400,000, further increasing traffic along the corridor.
- The continued growth of tourism is also steadily increasing traffic. Sullivan County is expected to receive 8 million visitors in 2019. Currently, the population climbs to 350,000 during the summer months and to an additional 50,000 on any given weekend.

#### **About 17-Forward-86**

17-Forward-86 was established in August 2018 by a dedicated group of advocates who support the widening of Route 17. The coalition comprises more than 200 members of economic development groups, construction trades, tourism groups and energy companies who share a common vision for expanding the capacity of Route 17 to strengthen the economic well-being of the Hudson Valley and Sullivan Catskills. To learn more, visit [www.17Forward86.org](http://www.17Forward86.org).



*(From left) Orange County Sheriff Carl DuBois; Maureen Halahan, President and CEO of the Orange County Partnership and co-chair of 17-Forward-86; Sullivan County Sheriff Michael Schiff; Undersheriff Eric Chaboty; and Marc Baez, President and CEO of the Sullivan County Partnership for Economic Development and co-chair of 17-Forward-86.*