

Poughkeepsie, NY - After many years of working hard to reach this moment, Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today helped open the Walkway Over the Hudson to the public. The Walkway, which spans the Hudson River and at 1.25 miles is the world's longest pedestrian bridge, is serving as a focal point for the quadricentennial celebration of Henry Hudson's exploration of the river that now bears his name. Hinchey was the first elected official to secure public funding for the project and helped leverage other funds for the rehabilitation of the former railroad bridge.

"Thirty-five years after a devastating fire shut down the Poughkeepsie-Highland Railroad Bridge, we've now transformed it into an architectural masterpiece that is the largest pedestrian bridge in the world. Once again, it will become one of the great bridges of the world and further enhance the Hudson Valley's identity," said Hinchey. "When Henry Hudson sailed up this river 400 years ago he never could have imagined that we'd be standing here today nor could he have imagined all that's taken place and been accomplished in the Hudson Valley since that time. This bridge will serve as the crown jewel of the Hudson Valley and provide millions of New Yorkers and visitors with unparalleled recreational opportunities and stunningly beautiful views of this majestic river. I'm honored to have played a part in helping all of us reach this day."

The Walkway Over the Hudson, which used to be known as the Poughkeepsie Railroad Bridge, is 121 years old and stands 212 feet above the Hudson River. Until recently, the 19th century structure had received virtually no maintenance or repairs since a 1974 fire ended its use as a railroad bridge. The bridge's rehabilitation project included the stabilization of the walkway onto the bridge from the western shore of the Hudson River on the Ulster County side and construction of an observation deck.

Hinchey has directly secured \$1.35 million in federal funding for the Walkway Over the Hudson and recently helped announce \$2.4 million in federal economic recovery funding for the bridge. The congressman is also the author of the legislation that created the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area. Just last month, Hinchey secured the designation of the Walkway as a National Recreation Trail (NRT). In response to a request from Hinchey, U.S. Interior Secretary Ken Salazar approved the National Park Service's recommendation for the designation. The Walkway now serves as the nexus of an extensive system of trails on both sides of the Hudson River, in essence, the "knot in the bowtie" of the regional trail system. National Recreation Trails have been a hallmark of the National Trails System since the first designations in 1971.

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On the eastern shore, the Walkway will connect the 12-mile Dutchess Rail Trail that is currently being built between Poughkeepsie and Wappingers Falls. There are also plans being developed to connect the Walkway to Marist College and Hyde Park's Roosevelt-Vanderbilt historic sites. The Walkway will also connect to the riverfront parks and trails in Poughkeepsie, including the Walkway Loop Trail, which will connect the new pedestrian bridge with the FDR Mid-Hudson Bridge to provide a 3.5 mile trail. On the western shore, the Walkway will connect to the existing 4-mile Hudson Valley Rail Trail via a 1-mile link now under construction. Finally, the New York State Department of Transportation regional transportation plan calls for the Hudson Valley trail to link with the existing 12-mile Wallkill Valley Rail Trail. Taken together, these links will create one of nation's premier trail systems as a result of the Walkway.