

Congressman Says Restoring Bridge Will Bring New Recreational & Economic Opportunities for Region

Washington, DC - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today announced the release of \$2.4 million in federal economic recovery funding for the Walkway Over the Hudson project. The money will be used to construct a single-shaft elevator and a stairway from ground level to the Walkway Over the Hudson overpass near Water Street in the City of Poughkeepsie. The funds come from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which Hinchey actively supported and voted for earlier this year. In accordance with the rules of the economic recovery package, Governor Paterson certified the funds for the bridge project, enabling the money to be released.

Hinchey has previously secured \$1.35 million in federal funding for Walkway Over the Hudson project. The bridge will play a central role in the upcoming quadricentennial celebration of Henry Hudson's exploration of the river that now bears his name.

"This new federal economic recovery funding will pay for an elevator and stairway for the bridge, which is a critical part of the overall project that will enable people to view the bridge from its overpass and from the banks of the Hudson River," Hinchey said. "These funds build upon our previous effort to move this project along in order to provide residents and visitors with beautiful recreational opportunities while also spurring economic development in the surrounding area. I am very pleased the federal economic recovery funds we passed in Washington are starting to make their way up to New York for important initiatives such as this one."

The Poughkeepsie Railroad Bridge is 119 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 includes 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. Upon completion, the project will yield a 1.25 mile trail spanning the Hudson River that will link over 30 miles of trail systems -- the Maybrook Corridor Trail in Dutchess County and the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail in Ulster County.

The bridge is slated to open to the public in the fall of 2009, which is the 400th anniversary of

the historic exploration of the Hudson River by Henry Hudson. The Poughkeepsie Railroad Bridge is going to be one of the main focal points of this year's quadricentennial celebration of the historic voyages of Henry Hudson and Samuel de Champlain, as well as for the bicentennial celebration of Robert Fulton's endeavor. The various events throughout New York commemorating and celebrating those historic anniversaries are intended to provide cultural and educational experiences and serve as a tourism attraction.