

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

Washington, DC - As part of his ongoing effort to restore the historic Poughkeepsie Railroad Bridge, Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today announced he secured final approval from Congress for his request of \$475,000 in new federal money to transform the bridge into the Walkway Over the Hudson -- a new pedestrian overpass spanning the Hudson River. The House approved the money yesterday as part of a major funding bill and the Senate is expected to do so next week.

Hinchey said the new funds would be used with other sources of previously secured funding, including \$874,000 in federal funding that he obtained in 2005 to pay for upgrades to the overpass. The new federal money for the bridge, which will play a central role in next year's quadricentennial celebration of Henry Hudson's exploration of the river that now bears his name, will be administered by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

"We are just a few months away from the long-awaited opening of the Walkway Over the Hudson and this new federal money will help pay for some of the remaining costs needed to complete the project," Hinchey said. "The redone bridge will provide residents and visitors with a beautiful view of the Hudson River, offer joggers, hikers, and bikers with a connection for 30 miles of trails, and serve as a tourism destination, which will in turn help boost the local economy. The newly enhanced bridge will provide scenic views and serve as one of the focal points of the upcoming quadricentennial celebration."

The Poughkeepsie Railroad Bridge 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 Walkkill 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.

"We are extremely pleased that Congressman Hinchey has once again been able to deliver an important contribution to the Walkway project. Clearly, Congressman Hinchey recognizes how important Walkway will be for the economic vitality of the Hudson Valley by delivering tourism, economic impact and hundreds of new jobs to the region," said Walkway's Executive Director Amy Husten.

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.

Hinchey secured \$874,000 in federal funds for the Poughkeepsie Railroad Bridge from Congress in 2005 as part of a major transportation projects bill. Those funds, which will be used for lighting elements across the walkway of the bridge, were the first major allocation of money for the Walkway Over the Hudson project and helped propel the rehabilitation initiative forward.

Hinchey is the author of the legislation that created the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area, the first federal action formally recognizing the fundamentally significant role the people of the Hudson Valley played in the early development of America and its institutions. The congressman has worked to secure a variety of sources of federal funding for the heritage area, including the \$475,000 secured this week for the Walkway Over the Hudson.