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CHAMPLAIN BRIDGE ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS EXTENDED

Increased Transport Costs and Retail Assistance Programs will be available to eligible businesses until December 2011

Empire State Development today announced that two programs to assist North Country businesses affected by the Lake Champlain bridge closure—the Increased Transport Costs and Retail Assistance Programs—have been extended for eligible businesses until December 2011, at which time the new, replacement bridge is expected to be completed and open.

The \$1 million Increased Transport Costs Program was created to offset additional costs that agricultural and manufacturing firms have incurred due to the bridge closure and the distance that detours have added to their business routes. The \$1.3 million Retail Assistance Program was created to help retail and service firms that have lost business revenue as a result of the bridge closure. Both funds are components of Governor David Paterson's \$2.94 million Champlain Bridge Assistance Program. The program, announced by the Governor in November, addresses the region's full range of economic industries by awarding grants to small businesses; making low-interest loans to small firms so they can pay employees and keep their doors open; and helping farms and manufacturers with increased travel costs.

“In rapid response to the Lake Champlain Bridge crisis, Governor Paterson and ESD worked together around the clock to formulate a recovery program that provides economic assistance to small businesses, farmers and manufacturers negatively impacted by the bridge closure,” said Empire State Development Chairman & CEO Dennis M. Mullen. “Months later, businesses are still facing hardship due to altered shopping patterns and circuitous detours that have added to transportation costs. We are pleased to extend these critical programs and pledge to continue to help our North Country businesses and communities work toward sustainable economic recovery in the region.”

The original deadline for the two grants was March 31, 2010, with ESD only providing assistance for eligible businesses with increased costs or lost revenue incurred between October 16, 2009 and December 31, 2009. The extension of these programs will now allow ESD to provide assistance through December 31, 2011. Applications will be accepted each quarter and eligible businesses can apply whether or not they applied in prior quarters. Businesses that have

already applied will need to reapply for additional assistance. Essex County's largest employer and global leader in the paper and packaging industry, International Paper, applied for and received assistance under the Increased Transport Assistance program in May.

International Paper Ticonderoga Mill Manager Kirk Carlson expressed appreciation: "This partnership with Empire State Development is important to our business. On behalf of the 600 employees at the Ticonderoga mill and the hundreds of loggers and truckers who earn a livelihood bringing wood fiber to the mill, I am extremely grateful for this consideration and assistance from the State of New York."

Businesses and firms affected by the Champlain Bridge closure are urged to apply for the Increased Transport Costs and Retail Assistance Programs. Eligibility for the programs remains the same. For more information about qualifying for either program, please contact ESD at 1-800-STATE-NY (1-800-782-8369) or by email at: champlainbridge@empire.state.ny.us. For further assistance, call ESD's Plattsburgh office at 518-561-5642.

Applications for the Increased Transport Costs Program can be downloaded and printed from the website at: <http://www.esd.ny.gov>. Please note, applications cannot be completed online. A modified Retail Assistance Program application will be available shortly.

The former Lake Champlain Bridge was closed last October after significant cracking was found in the structure's support piers. It was demolished in December. New York and Vermont worked quickly to subsidize existing ferry service; to establish free express bus service between New York and three major employers in Vermont; and to arrange a shuttle bus service between several New York park-and-ride locations and the ferries. Additionally, a 24-hour, free, temporary ferry was opened in February, drastically cutting commuting time between New York and Vermont and effectively reestablishing commerce and emergency service along the corridor. The temporary ferry, operated by the Lake Champlain Transportation Company, will continue to run until the new bridge is opened to traffic.

In early June, Governor David A. Paterson and Vermont Governor Jim Douglas broke ground on a new Lake Champlain Bridge spanning the lake between Crown Point, New York and Addison, Vermont.

Empire State Development is New York's chief economic development agency, committed to being recognized on a global scale as the economic development engine driving job growth, strategic investment and prosperity in New York State. ESD is intent on paving the way for New York State to become the leader of the innovation economy and one of the most business friendly, productive and competitive economic development climates in the world. ESD also oversees the marketing of "I LOVE NY," the State's iconic tourism brand. For more information, visit www.esd.ny.gov.

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