



New York Farm Bureau • 159 Wolf Road P.O. Box 5330 • Albany, New York 12205 • (518) 436-8495 Fax: (518) 431-5656 • www.nyfb.org

December 12, 2016

Docket Management Facility
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE., W12-40
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Docket No. FHWA-2016-0021; Federal Highway Administration; Commercial Activities on Interstate Rest Areas

Dear Administrator Nadeau,

New York Farm Bureau (NYFB), New York's largest general agricultural advocacy organization, appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Department of Transportation's proposed regulations regarding commercial activities on interstate rest areas. NYFB is supportive of changes to broaden the definition of allowable commercial activities in rest areas on the Eisenhower Interstate System and other federal-aid highways, as it relates to the advertisement of agriculture and agritourism.

New York State works hard to advertise New York agricultural products through the Taste NY Initiative, which seeks to promote and sell New York's quality agricultural products, including, maple syrup, craft beverages, meats, and dairy products. Taste NY not only markets to the state's consumers but national and international visitors as well. To date, over 1,110 local companies have participated in Taste NY, linking their products and the State's growing food and beverage market, and in 2016, the Taste NY sales reached \$10.5 million, an increase from \$4.5 million in 2015. These dollars provide New York State farmers with an additional avenue stream and increases economic growth across New York State farms.

Expanding the definition of allowable commercial activities in rest areas will allow for the transformation of the nation's antiquated rest area facilities into state-of-the art welcome centers that provide information and access to agricultural products and information on agricultural events throughout the state. Agricultural tourism provides unique opportunities for travelers to enjoy the bounty that New York State has to offer. As the "buy local movement" has grown across the country, individuals are seeking local products and the ability to purchase local agricultural products or obtain agricultural tourism information at interstate rest areas would help to meet the demand for local food.

A change in federal law, including the broadening of the definition of allowable commercial activities, would further bolster New York's opportunity to expand its Taste NY initiative and better promote local agriculture, food, and beverage. NYFB thanks you for the opportunity to share these comments and appreciate your thoughtful consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Fisher". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D" and "F".

David Fisher
President, New York Farm Bureau