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Inclusion Through Diversity

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Municipalities Urged to Act Now to Access Federal Stimulus Dollars**

At a County-sponsored briefing session for members of the Tompkins County Council of Governments (TCCOG), Representative Maurice Hinchey (D-22<sup>nd</sup> District) today called the \$819 billion federal stimulus package passed by the House of Representatives last week legislation that will make a “significant positive difference” in the nation’s economy over the next 18 months. But he added that it is imperative that municipal leaders communicate with their elected representatives to help ensure that the federal funding is allocated for local stimulus projects.

Mr. Hinchey advised that much of the money will be allocated directly to states, with state spending based on what it sees as its needs, and another large portion awarded to localities through existing federal agency funding streams. Since federal stimulus funding could win final approval as early as mid-February with funds beginning to flow by March, the Congressman said local governments need to alert their representatives quickly about recommended stimulus projects, to be in a competitive position to access the funding. Congress, he stated, has not specified how the money is to be spent, so continual monitoring by state and federal legislators will be essential. Infrastructure, education, investment in new technology (such as alternative energy) are some of the interest areas included, as well as tax cuts for middle-income Americans.

TCCOG members agreed that the challenge is to present a strong overall case for the funding without municipalities working against each other. With the State legislative delegation the current primary focus, County Administrator Joe Mareane offered for his office to develop a common presentation piece, communicating information about potential local stimulus projects ready to go in 90 days, 180 days and two years, as the legislation specifies. He reiterated Congressman Hinchey’s message that time is of the essence. Caroline Town Supervisor Don Barber, who chairs the Council of Governments, urges municipalities to submit initial stimulus proposals to County Administration by the end of this week, to be included in a coordinated package.

County Planning and Public Works Commissioner Ed Marx reported that the County, in its initial draft, has already identified potential stimulus projects, which include such initiatives as energy efficiency projects for public buildings and housing, transportation infrastructure programs, job training (including for “green” jobs), and rural broadband development.

The Council of Governments will receive an update on the stimulus package from Congressman Hinchey’s office at its next meeting, later this month.

*Contact: County Administrator Joe Mareane, 274-5551; Caroline Town Supervisor Don Barber, Chair-Tompkins County Council of Governments, 539-3395.*

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