2024 NYSAC Fall Seminar
Standing Committee on Agriculture, Economic Development & Rural Affairs
Resolution #1

Resolution Calling for the Development of Solar Energy Production Along New York State Thruway and State and Federally Controlled Divided Highways Rights-of-Way

WHEREAS, New York State has established ambitious renewable energy goals through the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA), which mandates that 70 percent of the state's electricity come from renewable sources by 2030 and aims for a 100 percent carbon-free electricity system by 2040; and

WHEREAS, achieving these goals requires significant expansion and diversification of the state's renewable energy infrastructure, including the development of solar energy projects; and

WHEREAS, the New York State Thruway and State and Federally Controlled Divided Highways, with their extensive rights-of-way, present a unique opportunity for the installation of solar panels without the need to use viable farmland or other land critical to agricultural production; and

WHEREAS, preserving viable farmland is essential for maintaining New York State's agricultural economy, supporting local food systems, and ensuring environmental sustainability; and

WHEREAS, using rights-of-way for solar energy production can provide a dual benefit of contributing to the state's renewable energy goals while preserving farmland and minimizing environmental impact; and

WHEREAS, the development of solar energy along New York State Thruway and State and Federally Controlled Divided Highways rights-of-way can create jobs, stimulate local economies, and provide a stable and sustainable source of energy for New York State; and

WHEREAS, successful implementation of solar energy projects along the New York State Thruway and State and Federally Controlled Divided Highways can serve as a model for other transportation corridors and rights-of-way across the state and country.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the New York State Association of Counties (NYSAC) calls upon Governor Kathy Hochul, the New York State Legislature, and the New York State Thruway Authority, and relevant federal agencies to prioritize

1   the development of solar energy production along New York State Thruway and State
2   and Federally Controlled Divided Highways rights-of-way; and
3
4   **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that NYSAC urges the state to provide necessary
5   funding, incentives, and regulatory support to facilitate the planning, installation, and
6   maintenance of solar energy projects along these right-of-ways; and
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8   **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, NYS land use policies must protect vital farmland
9   when it comes to siting renewable energy projects; and
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11   **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** that the State should study and consider the class of
12   land impacted in the right-of-way, and avoid establishing solar panels on Class A and
13   Class B lands; and
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15   **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that NYSAC encourages collaboration between state
16   agencies, local governments, private sector partners, and community stakeholders to
17   ensure the successful integration of solar energy projects along the Thruway; and
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19   **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, this resolution shall be forwarded to all counties in
20   New York state urging member counties to enact similar resolutions; and
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22   **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that copies of this resolution be transmitted to
23   Governor Kathy Hochul, the Majority and Minority Leaders of the New York State
24   Senate and Assembly, the Commissioner of the New York State Department of
25   Environmental Conservation, the Chairman of the New York State Energy Research and
26   Development Authority, the Executive Director of the New York State Thruway
27   Authority, the Commissioner of New York State Agriculture and Markets, relevant
28   federal agencies, and all others deemed necessary and proper.