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GOVERNOR ANDREW M. CUOMO

## GOVERNOR CUOMO ANNOUNCES MILESTONES FOR HUDSON RIVER SKYWALK

***Scenic Viewpoints Providing Unobstructed Views of Hudson River and Catskill Mountains Are Now Complete - Photos of New Scenic Viewpoints Available [Here](#)***

***Announces the Creation of the 'Hudson River Skywalk Region' to Help Draw Visitors to the Thomas Cole National Historic Site and Olana State Historic Site***

***Construction to Begin On Pedestrian-Friendly Roundabout Connecting East End of Rip Van Winkle Bridge to Olana State Historic Site***

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced major milestones in the Hudson River SkyWalk project, a scenic pedestrian trail linking two historical sites across the Hudson. The roughly one-mile long sidewalk of the Rip Van Winkle Bridge has been completely rebuilt by the New York State Bridge Authority with the addition of three scenic viewpoints, each 50 feet long by 10 feet wide. These scenic viewpoints will provide the public with unparalleled views of the Hudson River and Catskill Mountains.

"The Hudson River Skywalk proudly puts on display the majesty of the Hudson River and the Catskill Mountains," **Governor Cuomo said**. "This project is a perfect example of a successful public-private partnership between state and local partners promoting a unique part of New York State history and creating a timeless experience for generations to come."

The Governor also launched Phase 3 of the \$14.6 million project, which he announced as part of his tourism initiative in this year's State of the State. Phase 3 will utilize \$8 million for the NYS Department of Transportation to convert the intersection of Route 9G and Route 23 in the town of Greenport, Columbia County, into a pedestrian-friendly roundabout that will provide tourists a direct connection from the east end of the Rip Van Winkle Bridge to the Olana State Historic Site. Phase 3 is scheduled for substantial completion in fall 2018.

To help market this regional tourist attraction, Governor Cuomo announced the creation of the Hudson River Skywalk Region with \$225,000 in Market NY funds awarded to Thomas Cole National Historic Site in the 2017 Consolidated Funding Application awards through the Capital District Regional Economic Development Council. The Market NY funding award will help bring attention to this internationally significant destination through a coordinated advertising campaign, special exhibitions, coordinated visitor research and special events, including the Skywalk Arts Festival.

To enhance the Hudson River Skywalk Region, both historic sites have coordinated their schedules so that their historic homes and studios will be open on Saturdays and Sundays in March, and Fridays through Sundays starting March 30 (except on Easter Sunday, April 1). The grounds at both sites are open throughout the year.

Starting May 1, the Thomas Cole Site will be open for the season from Tuesday through Sunday. Starting June 19, Olana will be open for the season from Tuesday through Sunday. Additional visitors' information is available at [www.olana.org](http://www.olana.org) and [www.thomascole.org](http://www.thomascole.org).

NYSDOT will host an open house to present the preliminary concept for the roundabout on Thursday, March 22, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at Columbia-Greene Community College's Professional Academics Center at 4400 Route 23 in Hudson. This open house will highlight the conceptual plan and components of the project, as well as the project schedule. Attendees will have the opportunity to learn more about the project and the public is encouraged to attend.

As part of the \$6.275 million cost for Phase 2, the Capital Region Regional Economic Development Council initiative awarded Greene County \$875,000 in the 2016 Consolidated Funding Application awards through the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program. The award was given to help build the three scenic viewpoints and design and construct a sidewalk from the Thomas Cole National Historic Site to the Rip Van Winkle Bridge that will be completed in fall 2018. The New York State Bridge Authority provided \$5.4 million in capital funds toward Phase 2 to rehabilitate and rebuild the entire sidewalk and the railing along the Rip Van Winkle Bridge, while adding the three new scenic viewpoints.

**Bridge Authority Executive Director Joseph Ruggiero said,** "Governor Cuomo's support has helped this project reach a critical milestone and allowed it to progress to the next phase, which will benefit the public and the entire Catskill-Hudson Valley region. The Bridge Authority looks forward to continue working hand in hand with all of the community partners to make sure this project is a success."

**New York State Department of Transportation Acting Commissioner Paul A. Karas said,** "This new transportation infrastructure will do more than move people safely from one place to another; The Hudson River Skywalk will connect two important cultural sites, drawing more visitors who come not only to visit the historic sites, but to view the beauty of the Hudson River valley and enjoy all it has to offer. Governor Cuomo's leadership in using road and bridge improvements to stimulate local economies enhances safety and access while reviving Upstate communities."

**State Parks Commissioner Rose Harvey said,** "The creation of the Hudson River Skywalk Project is a reflection on the Governor's commitment towards expanding outdoor recreation opportunities for New Yorkers and visitors alike. Once completed, this new pedestrian connection will link to the Empire State Trail and provide an even greater scenic route to the picturesque grounds and mansion of Olana State Historic Site and further boost tourism throughout the region."

**Senator George Amedore said,** "The Hudson River Skywalk establishes an important connection between two historical sites that have played such an integral role in the region's history. At the same time, it provides an enhanced opportunity for residents and visitors alike to enjoy the breathtaking natural beauty of the river and surrounding areas."

**Assemblymember Didi Barrett said**, "The birth of America's first art movement and, arguably, the birth of America's first land conservation consciousness can both be traced to this stunningly beautiful spot in the Hudson Valley where landscape painters Thomas Cole and Frederic Church each had homes on opposite sides of the river. This designation of the Hudson River Skywalk Region connecting these two historic sites is a fitting recognition for this iconic location and its inspirational views."

**Sean Sawyer, the Washburn and Susan Oberwager President of The Olana Partnership, said**, "The Hudson River Skywalk will be unique in the world. Only here can visitors walk between the homes and studios of two internationally renowned artists and experience the views that gave birth to American art and environmental consciousness."

**Elizabeth Jacks, Executive Director of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site, said**, "These two historic sites - representing Thomas Cole and Frederic Church - have been connected by history for nearly two hundred years. With the construction of the walkways of the Hudson River Skywalk, that historic and thematic connection will be made into concrete and steel. Now, it is our goal to establish this connection in the public eye as well, so that the Hudson River Skywalk Region is seen and known as one spectacular unified destination."

**Greene County Legislature Chair Kevin Lewis said**, "With the help of Governor Cuomo's leadership, the Hudson River Skywalk project will be a crown jewel drawing thousands of tourists to the area annually to see our historic landmarks and natural beauty."

**Village of Catskill Board of Trustees President Vincent Seeley said**, "The Hudson River Skywalk project, under the leadership of Governor Cuomo, has come to fruition and will be a boon for both communities on either side of the river when its complete."

**Town of Greenport Supervisor Kathleen Eldridge said**, "This will be a wonderful destination for all who visit our beautiful region and we would like to thank Governor Cuomo for his dedication to making this project possible. DOT and our State partners have been very receptive to the communities needs and suggestions."

### **The New York State Bridge Authority**

The NYS Bridge Authority operates the Bear Mountain, Newburgh-Beacon, Mid-Hudson, Kingston-Rhinecliff and Rip Van Winkle bridges and owns and maintains the structure of the Walkway Over the Hudson Bridge. The Authority is funded principally from bridge tolls and receives no state or federal tax monies for bridge maintenance and operation.

### **Olana and The Olana Partnership**

Olana is the greatest masterpiece of Frederic Edwin Church (1826-1900), the preeminent American artist of the mid-19th Century. Church designed Olana as a holistic environment integrating his advanced ideas about art, architecture, landscape design, and environmental conservation. Olana's 250-acre artist-designed landscape with a Persian-inspired house at its summit embraces unrivaled panoramic views of the Hudson Valley and Catskill Mountains and, today, welcomes more than 170,000 visitors annually.

Olana State Historic Site, a historic site administered by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Taconic Region, is a designated National Historic Landmark and one of the most visited sites in the state. The Olana Partnership, a private not-for-profit education corporation, works cooperatively with New York State to support the restoration,

conservation, and interpretation of Olana State Historic Site. To learn more about Olana and The Olana Partnership, please visit [www.olana.org](http://www.olana.org).

### **Thomas Cole National Historic Site**

Thomas Cole National Historic Site is a forward-thinking organization that presents special exhibitions of 19th-century landscape paintings, contemporary art installations, and immersive video presentations that bring to life the original home and studios of Thomas Cole, the founder of the Hudson River School of painting, the nation's first major art movement. Located on 6 acres in the Hudson Valley, the site includes the 1815 Main House; Cole's 1839 Old Studio; the recently reconstructed New Studio building; and panoramic views of the Catskill Mountains. It is a National Historic Landmark and an affiliated area of the National Park System. The Cole Site's activities include innovative public programs such as the Hudson River School Art Trail—an interactive map and website that enable visitors to visit the places and see the very same views that Cole and Church painted. The goal of all programs at the Cole Site is to enable visitors to find meaning and inspiration in Thomas Cole's life and work. The themes that Cole explored in his art and writings—such as landscape preservation and our conception of nature as a restorative power—are both historic and timely, providing the opportunity to connect to audiences with insights that are highly relevant to their own lives. To learn more about the Thomas Cole Site, please visit [www.thomascole.org](http://www.thomascole.org). The Thomas Cole Site is the gateway to the Great Northern Catskills. To learn more, visit [www.greatnortherncatskills.com](http://www.greatnortherncatskills.com).

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