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# Long Island Lobby Day June 8th 2009

**Organization participating in this endeavor include:**

AARP LI Chapter  
Citizens Campaign for the Environment  
Huntington Chamber of Commerce  
Long Island Federation of Labor  
LI Hispanic Chamber of Commerce  
LISTNET  
Nassau-Suffolk Coalition for the Homeless  
Nassau Council of Chambers of Commerce  
Suffolk Community Council  
Tri-State Transportation Campaign  
Vision Long Island

A diverse coalition of organizations are working together to advance meaningful issues for the Long Island's quality of life and our economy. Our agenda includes five critical issues and ten action items: sewers, transportation, energy, human services and small business. The mix of regulatory, budget and legislative actions that Albany must take to help Long Island is daunting but entirely practical in this legislative session.

# Agenda

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## 1) Sewers

- a) Increase sewer funding through the Environmental Facilities Corporation fund.
- b) New York State Smart Growth Public Infrastructure Policy Act (A8011)

## 2) Energy

- a) Offshore wind
- b) The 14x Stimulus Plan: Energy Efficiency for Homes and Businesses

## 3) Transportation

- a) Regional Bus (A08520)
- b) Road Improvements - Complete Streets (S05711, A08587)
- c) Road Improvements - Fix-it-First
- d) Multimodal transportation solutions for Nassau HUB/ Lighthouse and Heartland Town Center

## 4) Human Services

- a) Homelessness Prevention/Rapid Rehousing Program (HPRP)

## 5) Small Businesses, Jobs & Economic Development

- a) Statewide legislation that helps small businesses in down towns, equivalent to the incentives to keep large companies on Long Island. This can include tax breaks, tax credits, or loans.
- b) Reducing LIPA debt

# 1) Sewers

## a) Increase sewer funding through the Environmental Facilities Corporation fund.

Long Islanders agree that a key step in preparing for growth and maintaining our existing population is to ensure that sewer infrastructure is adequately maintained, upgraded and expanded in key communities. Currently, 30% of Suffolk County is sewered, and the systems in Nassau County are antiquated and in need of improvements to meet new water quality standards. Sewers protect public health; in fact they were first created in response to public health crises. In order for new downtowns to thrive, population density must increase. Density cannot increase in these Suffolk County communities without sewers. With inevitable population growth imminent on Long Island—NYMTC predicts 307,000 new residents in Suffolk and 154,000 in Nassau by the year 2035—sewer infrastructure must be in place to ensure that growth is accommodated in an intelligent and protective manner. Dozens of LI communities submitted sewer projects to New York State for funding from the stimulus package, yet only two were funded (the Village of Greenport and SUNY Stony Brook).

Using Environmental Facilities Corporation funding, specifically support the following sewer projects, all which were submitted to NYS for stimulus funding:

Sewer District No. 8 in Ronkonkoma/Lake Ronkonkoma, Mastic/Shirley Sewers and Infrastructure, Rocky Point, Wyandanch, Bay Park Sewage Treatment Plant in the Town of Hempstead, Cedar Creek Sewage Treatment Plant in the Town of Hempstead, Micro Turbines, Methane gas collection, and Headworks improvements for the Huntington Sewer District, Sayville, Great Neck, the Town of Riverhead (including Howell Pump Station, Calverton STP, Riverhead STP, and Defriest Pump Station), Smithtown/Kings Park, Southampton, Village of Hempstead, Village of Northport, Village of Patchogue, Village of Port Jefferson, Bergen Point Wastewater Treatment Plant Improvements.

## b) New York State Smart Growth Public Infrastructure Policy Act (A8011)

New York State needs to focus on smart spending that supports both existing infrastructure and infrastructure development in areas where it makes economic and environmental sense. This bill would require state infrastructure funding to be consistent with smart growth principles, with priority given to existing infrastructure and projects that are consistent with local governments' plans for development.

The establishment of the **New York State Smart Growth Public Infrastructure Policy Act (A8011)** would require certain state agencies (including the Department of Transportation, the Department of Education, the New York State Housing Finance Agency, the Housing Trust Fund Corporation, the Environmental Facilities Corporation, the Dormitory Authority, and the New York State Urban Development Corporation), to fund infrastructure in a manner that is consistent with smart growth principles. These agencies would give funding priority to existing infrastructure and projects that are consistent with local governments' plans for development. The Act would also provide that these agencies establish a smart growth advisory committee. In addition, the bill provides for an infrastructure appeal board that would consider requests for variances from the requirements of this bill.

## 2) Energy

### a) Offshore Wind

There is a tremendous offshore wind resource both in the Great Lakes and in the Atlantic Ocean. Recently, New York State has been proactively developing land-based wind energy. This includes the largest wind farm east of the Mississippi River, Maple Ridge Wind Farm in Lewis County, with an installed capacity of 231 MW, or enough to power 68,000 homes each year. Much of this clean, renewable wind energy is located in the upstate regions of New York. Now is the time to aggressively move forward with siting offshore wind for Long Island. We are encouraged by the recent announcement for the Long Island Power Authority (LIPA) to team up with Con Ed and the New York Power Authority (NYPA) in a public-private partnership to advance this energy agenda.

A joint feasibility study released by the two utilities concluded that an interconnection of up to 700 MW of wind power, located at least 13 miles off the Rockaway Peninsula in the Atlantic Ocean, would be feasible with upgrades to their respective transmission systems. An aggressive process should be put forth to include LI stakeholders in this process and to seek the most efficient and effective location for this wind proposal.

### b) The 14x Stimulus Plan: Energy Efficiency for Homes and Businesses

The 14x Stimulus Plan recommends using state and local stimulus funds to create a local mortgage buy-down program that offers reduced mortgage interest rates contingent upon renovating existing homes or building new ones to meet specific energy reduction targets. For existing homes, mortgage interest rates would be lowered by 1% if the home is renovated to meet specific efficiency standards. For new homes, mortgage rates would be .05% less to meet specified efficiency standards. Homeowners save in mortgage rates and in reduced energy costs.

The private building sector represents 93% of total U.S. building stock while the public building sector represents only 7%. The economic health of every U.S. industry is tied to the private building sector, especially housing. This includes everything from steel, insulation, caulking, mechanical and electrical equipment, solar systems, glass, wood, metals, tile, fabrics and paint to architecture, planning, design, engineering, banking, development manufacturing, construction, wholesale, retail, and distribution.

The pairing of interest rates and energy reduction targets turns out to be economically powerful, both creating an immediate demand for construction jobs and generating significant private spending. The effectiveness of the plan in creating jobs and private spending has prompted a public/private partnership to strategically focus stimulus dollars that will enable a full-scale building industry revival while simultaneously addressing energy and greenhouse gas emissions reductions.

### 3) Transportation

#### a) Regional Bus (A08520)

Long Island Bus has historically been underfunded via an opaque agreement among Nassau County, the MTA, and the State. A regional bus system would end the annual funding battles and would integrate bus systems to create a fluid and seamless suburban transit system that would improve the quality of life of LI residents, support economic development and protect our environment.

Suffolk Transit has also been underfunded over the years even as ridership has grown significantly. Though the funding stream for Suffolk Transit is not as difficult (since only two entities, State and County, are the funding source), expansion of service difficult due to limited resources. Including Suffolk Transit into a regional bus system is also worthy of consideration.



#### b) Road Improvements - Complete Streets (S05711, A08587)



Long Island's roads are some of the most dangerous in the region to pedestrians, cyclists and motorists. From 2005-2007 alone, 184 pedestrians were killed on Long Island's roads. An overwhelming number of these fatalities were among Long Island's senior population. 'Complete streets' is a policy that designs and builds roads for all users and for all people of varying abilities. Users are defined as motorists, cyclists, pedestrians and transit users. People of all abilities include the elderly, children and people with disabilities. Other states have implemented complete streets legislation, including California, Oregon, Massachusetts, Illinois, and Virginia, and many others are also considering such policies. In March 2009, a federal Complete Streets Act was

proposed. Designing roadways from a 'complete streets' perspective will create safer environments for all users, as well as, promote cycling and walking as viable forms of transportation.

### **c) Road Improvements - Fix-it-First**

Long Island's roads are among the worst in the country. A recent study by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) ranked the quality of New York's roads as in the bottom five nationally. Motorists spend an additional \$405 a year in vehicle operating costs because of rough roads. This is \$70 more than the national average. The New York State Department of Transportation needs to prioritize the maintenance and repair of its *existing* road and bridge infrastructure over capacity expansion projects. Shifting this priority is the first step to creating a sustainable and environmentally friendly transportation system.

### **d) Multimodal transportation solutions for Nassau HUB/Lighthouse and Heartland Town Center**

Multimodal improvements for new developments at the Lighthouse in central Nassau and Heartland Town Center at the former Pilgrim State property. Improved bus service, rail service and connections, pedestrian and bicycle access as well as roadway improvements on Sagitkos Parkway and Meadowbrook Parkway should be planned and funded.



## 4) Human Services

### a) Homelessness Prevention/Rapid Re-housing Program (HPRP)

The Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP) is a new program (created through the Recovery Act) which is intended to assist persons struggling with maintaining their housing. The program provides funding to localities and/or non-profit organizations to assist households with cash assistance for rent, security, and relocation expenses; relocation and home finding assistance; and support services to assist households in improving their ability to achieve financial sustainability.

Funding for this program has been allocated to localities based upon the formula used for the Emergency Shelter Program. Localities whose allocations were below \$500,000 forfeited these funds, which were automatically added to the larger state pool of funds. In New York, the State's total allocation (including allocations forfeited by localities and any funds allocated directly to the state) is over \$24 million. The New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) has published a Notice of Anticipated Funding Availability (NAFA) and intends to distribute these funds through a competitive Request for Proposals.

Nassau-Suffolk has the highest Fair Market Rent within New York State, and is among the regions with the highest foreclosure rate. Although the Long Island region has received allocations, we feel that additional funding is needed to address the needs of the many households who are at risk of losing their housing. Further, funds are needed to help those who are homeless as a result of the economy so that they can access permanent, affordable housing.

We are aware that both localities and non-profit providers within the Nassau-Suffolk region plan to apply for additional HPRP funding through New York State. We encourage our legislators to support a review of these applications based upon the merit of the individual or collective plans, capacity of the applicants, and tremendous need in our region.



## 5) Small Businesses, Jobs, & Economic Development

**a) Statewide legislation that helps small businesses in downtowns, equivalent to the incentives to keep large companies on Long Island. This can include tax breaks, tax credits, or loans.**

Recently, New York State, Suffolk County, and the Town of Huntington dedicated up to \$100 million to help keep Canon on Long Island by helping to purchase its new 52 acre lot in Melville. New York State should put that kind of commitment into its downtowns, where small businesses struggle to maintain employees and make their rents. If just one small business fails, an entire community suffers the loss of jobs, local revenues, and quality of life. Healthy downtowns cannot survive without small businesses.

In Maryland, the State incentivizes small business development in several ways. There is a Governor's Office of Business Advocacy and Small Business Assistance (GOBA), which helps business owners identify and connect with appropriate resources to help them grow. Its goal is to connect small and minority-owned businesses to the appropriate resources. It provides information and offers assistance on all business matters including permitting and licensing, taxation, creating a business plan, workplace safety, health, transportation and the environment. The Maryland Small Business Development Center (SBDC) offers individual training and support for all stages of small-business development. Through Maryland's Enterprise Zone Program there are several forms of business tax credits in targeted communities, including one for improvements to property and one for job creation. The Income Tax Credit for job creation gives a 1-3 year credit for wages paid to new employees, favoring the economically disadvantaged. New York State would greatly benefit from similar policies.

### **b) Reducing LIPA Debt**

Long Island ratepayers and businesses are burdened with one of the highest electricity rates in the nation. This is caused by LIPA's crushing, \$6.6 billion debt, associated in part with the shuttered Shoreham nuclear power plant, which arose from federal policies promoting this facility. Today, approximately 16% of every electric customer's bill goes to servicing LIPA's debt. Lowering electric rates by paying off this debt, or at the very



minimum, obtaining federal assistance in refinancing the debt and lowering the interest rates, is crucial to helping Long Island ratepayers and businesses weather the current economic downturn. A decrease in LIPA debt will promote a vibrant future marked by green jobs, new industry, and full employment.

Reducing LIPA's debt will benefit every ratepayer, business, school district and municipality on Long Island. Boosting Long Island's economy will, in turn, increase financial activity and investment throughout the region, improving the state and federal economies as well.