Executive Summary

The Town of Southampton has experienced a tremendous growth in population, particularly in the peak summer months, when second homeowners and their guest result in a tripling of the year round population. The transportation system supporting that population growth has remained essentially the same for the last thirty years with the exception of the Hampton Jitney and Hampton Luxury Lines Services, which provide express bus service between Manhattan and the Towns of Southampton and East Hampton. While important services, they meet only a tiny portion of the Town's overall transportation needs.

The stagnation of the transportation system in the face of the population growth and the growth of trips within the Town have led to steadily increasing traffic congestion particularly on major arterials east of the Shinnecock Canal. The congestion experienced on these arterials has spilled traffic into the surrounding residential communities, as frustrated motorists explore new routes in hope of avoiding the stop and go traffic on Montauk Highway and County Road 39.

The automobile is the most popular means of travel in Southampton mostly out of necessity. Public transportation does not provide a frequent convenient ride for most trip purposes. The Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) has no train service within the Town of Southampton during the weekday A.M. and P.M. peak commuting periods. The LIRR does carry significant numbers of passengers eastbound on summer Fridays and Saturdays and westbound on summer Sundays. The LIRR has added some additional service during these ridership peaks. The uneven demand for service results in a need to subsidize the existing operation, however, and the LIRR estimates that the subsidy amounts to $20.00 per rider. The Suffolk County Transit (SCT) bus system is designed to cover the most potential riders given a limited budget. As a result, it is often difficult to get from point to point without substantial delay. Less than half of the bus routes serving the Town offer service on the hour and a majority offer service only every two hours. Point-to-point rides are difficult, if not on one of the existing routes. The operation of the system is heavily subsidized by the Suffolk County General Fund with only 25% of the operating budget being covered by rider fares. Many of the routes experience little ridership and thus are financial burdens to the County. Better interconnectivity between the LIRR and Suffolk County Transit is essential.

It has also been recognized that the Town's dysfunctional transportation system will be under increasing pressure in the future. The increase in year round population and second homeowners has been largely driven by large number of new single-family homes built during the last 30 years. These housing units are spread throughout the Town, on large lots, which generally do not create the density necessary to make public transit systems efficient.

This update of the Town of Southampton Comprehensive Plan proposes several "large impact strategies" that are intended to relieve congestion by using a multi-modal approach. In addition, land use and zoning policies are recommended to protect the existing transportation infrastructure and to facilitate the use of public transportation in the future.

Executive Summary *(continued)*

The Large Impact Strategies include:

1. The County Road 39 Project:
   The reconstruction of County Road 39 (C.R. 39) is recommended from Sunrise Highway (NYS Route 27) on the west to North Main Street or David White's Lane on the east to provide two eastbound and two westbound lanes with a center landscaped median where feasible. Burying of the utility lines, and landscape enhancements on both sides of the road are also called for. Suffolk County has earmarked funding for this improvement project in its capital budget. The project scope proposed by the County project extends eastward to C.R. 39's intersection with Montauk Highway (S.R. 27) and continues approximately one half mile to the east. It is the Town's recommendation that the second eastbound through lane be terminated either east of North Main Street or east of David White's Lane, but that other improvements east of the termination be completed. Improving traffic safety, and addressing emergency service delivery and evacuation needs for the South Fork are priority objectives of the Town for the C.R. 39 Improvement Project. This update of the Southampton Town Comprehensive Plan supports the improvement project and advocates for design enhancements.

2. Hamlet Shuttles: Improved Rail and Bus Transit:
   Development of an Integrated Bus and Rail Transit System based on frequent rail service (every half hour in each direction) between Montauk Point and some point west of Speonk[1]; the location to be determined by study to capture the highest ridership. Feeder bus service would serve hamlet rail stations. Express bus shuttle service would serve Riverhead and Sag Harbor. This concept should be fully evaluated in conjunction with an evaluation of the "Joint Use Corridor," below.

3. The LIRR Joint Use Corridor:
   Evaluation of the construction of a new roadway between County Road 39 (C.R. 39) and East Hampton Airport (if agreeable with East Hampton). The following options should be fully studied in a detailed evaluation (engineering, environmental, economic, and planning analysis).

[1]Although both locations noted are outside of the Town of Southampton (e.g. Shirley is in the Town of Brookhaven and Montauk is in the Town of East Hampton), there is recognition that over 40,000 commuters cross the Brookhaven Town Line daily to head east on the South Fork and a more viable Integrated Bus and Rail Transit System is being advocated, including servicing workforce needs on the East End. In the Town of Southampton, the Speonk train station is the most westerly intermodal location while the Bridgehampton train station is the most easterly intermodal location.

a. Construction of a new limited access two-lane roadway (either free or toll) with interchanges only at County Road 39, between Water Mill and Bridgehampton and east of Bridgehampton at the East Hampton Airport.

b. Construction of a new at grade two lane roadway with access at each cross street.

c. Removal of the existing track and train service and its replacement with a new limited access road, either free or toll.

Under the "joint use" concept a new roadway would utilize the LIRR rights-of-way. The Joint Use Corridor may be envisioned as a toll road for a congestion management strategy. The Corridor will also provide a necessary emergency evacuation route and an additional route for emergency services to promptly respond to incident scenes and/or Southampton Hospital.

4. Montauk Highway (S.R. 27) from Flying Point Road to Townline Road:
Evaluation (engineering, landscaping and traffic calming) to see if traffic flow can be improved without significantly disrupting the rural, historic nature of the Water Mill and Bridgehampton hamlet centers. The evaluation would also provide a detailed proactive access management plan for the roadway to manage private and public access most effectively without reducing traffic safety or flow. In addition to developing a plan to protect the integrity of the roadway, the project could implement many of the access management recommendations of the Water Mill Hamlet and Bridgehampton Hamlet Studies and the recommendations of the STAF Land Committee, if the project determined they were consistent with the overall plan developed. Perhaps the best examples of the STAF Land Committee recommendations were those suggesting the creation of new roadways and pathways behind the retail stores north of Montauk Highway in Water Mill and Bridgehampton.

5. Montauk Highway (C.R. 80) from Tiana Road/Sears Bellows Road to the Shinnecock Canal:
Evaluation (engineering and traffic calming) to see what traffic flow and safety improvements can be implemented to improve conditions. Four of fifteen high accident locations within the Town were located in this area and the roadway is often congested. Improvements to be considered would include the evaluation of the Good Ground Road Extension.

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6. Southampton Town Transportation Planning and Traffic Safety Division:
Establish a new division in the Department of Land Management or Department of Public Works to provide expertise and guidance in administration of an Access Management Program. The Traffic Department would also assist the Town Board in evaluating 1) requests for traffic control, 2) complaints of unsafe traffic conditions, and 3) recommendations for improvements, such as those from the Southampton Transportation Advisory Task Force (STAF) Land Committee. In addition, the staff or director of this office would serve as Coordinator for the Transportation Advisory Commission, as well as, oversee improvement projects related to street lighting, bicycle lanes, traffic calming and transit enhancements. This new Transportation Planning and Traffic Safety Division is better placed within the framework of the Town's Department of Public Works or Department of Land Management rather than the Southampton Town Police Department.

7. Southampton Town Transportation Commission:
Create a new commission to help steer implementation of the Transportation Comprehensive Plan Update and help oversee all transportation planning matters. For guidance, the new Transportation Planning and Traffic Safety Division would interface with the Transportation Commission and act as coordinator on matters which pertain to transportation. The Commission would provide a forum for citizen involvement and input and would report to the Town Board.

8. East End Transportation Authority:
Explore the creation of a separate transportation authority with the other Towns and Villages of the East End or at a minimum on the South Fork, starting with East Hampton Town and East Hampton Village. Their cooperation and approval is necessary to achieve many transportation planning objectives including two of the large impact strategies outlined above.

9. Traffic Management:
The improved rail system will require centralized operation and control. The feeder and shuttle bus service must be more tightly controlled to meet the train schedule. In addition it has been proposed that County Road 39 (C.R. 39) and the proposed new roadway be provided active "traffic management"[2] requiring 24-hour a day, 7-day a week monitoring. Each of these activities can be run by existing or new facilities: the railroad from the MTA-LIRR central control center in Jamaica; the buses from a new County facility in Yaphank and the highways from the New York State Department of Transportation INFORM center in Hauppauge. As an option a new "East End Transportation Authority" could be considered to run all three services in a comprehensive fashion.

[2] "Traffic Management" is the active monitoring of the highway system using traffic sensors and closed circuit TV. Based on the incoming data signal system timings are modified, variable message signs are activated and incidents are identified and help dispatched.

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The first three large impact strategies are large capital expenditure projects and will likely require Federal Aid. To move these projects forward the appropriate procedures required for Transportation Project Funding will have to be adhered to. Each project will have to be scoped, a preliminary design and environmental review conducted, and the final project designed and implemented.

It should be noted that scoping for environmental review processes has been completed by the Suffolk County Department of Public Works (SCDPW) for the C.R. 39 project. This project is ready to move into the preliminary design and environmental analysis phase. The other potential large impact projects will need to be evaluated to examine their effectiveness to address the problems that exist currently and in the future. An analysis that will meet the rigorous analysis requirements needs to be funded and pursued at the earliest possible date. This process will take a minimum at four to six years. The budget to fund any of these capital alternatives, in competition with other transportation funding needs, is likely to push implementation much further into the future.

The Land Use Strategies are based on Preservation, Smart Growth and Access Management. As noted previously, the ongoing construction of new single-family homes and changing demographics (e.g., more year-round family occupants) is the key driving force behind traffic growth. Continuing efforts by the Town and County to preserve environmentally sensitive land and farmland will result in a substantial reduction in the number of homes that can be built in the area. This effort must continue.

If public transit systems are to work efficiently, the people that use them must be close to them (i.e. easy walking distances) and the use (e.g., business, recreational facility, hospital, school, etc.) the riders are destined for must also be close. Commercial and industrial uses must be clustered close to hamlet centers and the train stations. Residential uses must also be encouraged in areas that can be more readily be served by the rail system and its feeder buses. This goal could be accomplished through the transfer of development rights from areas that cannot be well served into areas that can be well served by the transportation infrastructure. Higher density single family and multi-family housing is more appropriate in areas that can be well served by transit. The SEEDS' project will be examining "Smart Growth"[3] strategies for the five Towns and nine Villages comprising the North and South Forks of Eastern Long Island.

The Transportation Study also recognizes that the Town of Southampton and East Hampton attract a large quantity of workers from outside the towns because those workers could not afford to live in these Towns. The provision of affordable housing for year round employees in both Towns would reduce not only travel time and distance for employees but also congestion on the Town's roadways.

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[3] "Smart Growth": A strategy which recognizes connections between development and quality of life issues. It invests time, attention, and resources to restore community centers and preserve open space. It encourages development where transportation and infrastructure already exist and promotes land use which can be served by and will strengthen public transit facilities.

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Access Management is the final element of the Land Use Strategies. The State, County and Town roadways are a valuable asset and Access Management is a program designed to protect those assets by maintaining their ability to carry traffic safely and efficiently. While the State and County have jurisdiction over access to their roadways, the Town has far greater power to protect the roadways through its land use powers than do the State or County. The Access Management strategy includes:

- A classification system for all roadways in the Town to determine the level of access management protection.

- A recommended set of standards to be applied to any request for access to the transportation network or infrastructure.

- A recommendation to create a new Town Transportation Planning and Traffic Safety Division to assist the Department of Land Management and Office of Engineering (Department of Public Works) in the administration of the Access Management Program.