

VII. OBSTACLES TO AN INTEGRATED TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

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The congestion seen predominantly in the eastern portion of Southampton Town results from forces both inside and outside the Town that make finding solutions difficult. At least 25% of the traffic using the primary roads in the eastern part of the Town are destined for East Hampton, both during the typical A.M. and P.M. weekday peak period and during peak weekend travel periods. Much of this traffic originates west of the Town of Southampton either in central or western Suffolk County as is the case during the weekdays or further west from New York City on the weekends. Even if the Town of Southampton developed a completely successful integrated transportation system within its borders, it would not address these traffic movements. **The transportation flows are regional and therefore regional solutions must be developed.** A consensus within the region must be developed to do this.

While the transportation problems are regional, there are regional transportation providers:

- The New York State Department of Transportation, which is responsible for all State Highways on Long Island, and in particular, two of the most heavily traveled roadways within the Town (Route 27 and Route 24).
- The Suffolk County Department of Public Works, which is responsible for all County Highways.
- The Long Island Rail Road, which is responsible for operating Long Island's regional rail system.
- Suffolk County Transit, which operates local bus routes in Suffolk County.

The Long Island Rail Road (LIRR), which has huge unused capacity in eastern Long Island and which could contribute to a major increase in public transportation capability, is focused on its primary mission, transporting large numbers of commuters into and out of New York City. Its capital program is presently focused on East Side Access (bringing the LIRR into Grand Central Station) and providing an additional track on the mainline to Ronkonkoma. This capital program focus will influence decision-making by the State and funding availability for other projects.

Suffolk County Transit operates local bus routes all over Suffolk County. Ridership fares only cover 25% of the operating costs of the system with some help coming from Federal Highway program and the rest from the County. The budget is tight and is often looked at when the County has fiscal constraints. Major expansion of service within the Town of Southampton would be subject to availability funds and County-wide priorities.

The Suffolk County Department of Public Works has a wide area of responsibility with respect to the County Highway System. It has also recognized that County Road 39 in the Town of Southampton is a major traffic congestion problem. The County has undertaken a project to provide improvement of the roadway encompassing 2 lanes westbound, 2 lanes eastbound with an intermittent turning lane median. The first phase of the project is complete and a preliminary estimate of costs indicates that improvement of the road could cost between 50 and 65 million dollars depending on whether a raised median is included in the project or not. This is a significant commitment of County funds should the project go forward, particularly when considering that County Roads such as Nicolls Road and North Ocean Avenue in western Suffolk carry twice the daily volume of traffic and also experience significant traffic congestion.

The New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) is currently completing the reconstruction of the entire length of Route 24 Flanders Road. The NYSDOT has responsibility for all of the State Highways on Long Island including the parkway system. Many of these roadways carry four to five times the average daily traffic compared to the State Highway facilities in Southampton Town and most exhibit congestion at the similar levels with Montauk Highway in Water Mill and Bridgehampton. Much of the major construction dollars have been focused on improvements to the Long Island Expressway for the past 10 years. These LIE projects are due to be completed shortly and major improvements to other roadways such as Route 347 in Suffolk County or the Southern State Parkway in Nassau County are high on the priority list.

The Town of Southampton and County of Suffolk has not undertaken major transportation improvement projects without the assistance of Federal and State Aid. Federal Aid is distributed through the Transportation Improvement Programs (TIP). There are various funding sources within the TIP and the TIP provides various types of projects including highway and bridge reconstruction, funding for the capital costs of bus acquisition. All Federal Aid Highway funding, even that used by the State on State facilities must be administered and distributed through the TIP. There is substantial competition for the available Federal Aid as there are generally far more projects than there is funding available to cover. Projects are nominated to be added to the TIP once a year and the four member Transportation Coordination Committee (TCC) votes on each project. The TCC membership includes:

MTA Chairperson
Nassau County Executive
Region 10, Director of NYSDOT
Suffolk County Executive

The four members represent the four major transportation providers on Long Island and the bulk of the Federal Aid dollars are spent on State and County Highways and MTA projects, where traffic volumes and congestion problems tend to be the most severe. Specific Federal Aid is set aside for local projects, but in terms of overall funding these are generally smaller amounts. With the competition for funds so great, it is difficult for Towns to put forward large transportation projects without the direct cooperation of one or more of the four major providers.

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