

**LONG ISLAND WOULD BENEFIT BY HAVING
A METROPOLITAN PLANNING
ORGANIZATION OF ITS OWN**

September 2023

Summary of Findings

- A region's transportation needs are in large part addressed through Metropolitan Planning Organizations
- Long Island is part of the New York Metropolitan Transit Council, which is composed of leaders from New York City and several surrounding suburban counties.
- These leaders meet periodically to incorporate various long-term projects into a transportation plan for the region.
- Projects in New York City monopolize the long-term planning, goals, and funds allocated.
- While Long Island receives significant funding for the Long Island Rail Road, only 7% of its population utilizes the railroad or city transit on a regular basis. The vast majority of Long Islanders rely on an antiquated road system that was constructed in an era before the huge population boom.
- Long Island has a population of approximately 3 million people, which would make it the third largest city in America.
- Yet projects targeted to this region, as well as funds allocated, pale in comparison to regions of similar size, and even to those that are far smaller.
- NYTMC long term allocation funds for NYC are \$1.7T.
- NYTMC long term allocation funds for Long Island are \$12B.
- Los Angeles long term allocation funds are \$400B, and Chicago's funds are \$517B.
- NYMTC 2050 plan created in 2021 shows \$49.6B allocated for 17 Major System Enhancement Projects and Programs. Only two projects totaling \$979M slated for Long Island.
- The 2022-2023 highway and transit budgets for Nassau and Suffolk Counties total approximately \$450 million, while Philadelphia 2022-2023 is \$1.52 billion and Houston 2022-2023 budget is \$1.8 billion.
- Long Island can benefit significantly if it were permitted to create its own metropolitan planning organization so that funding for New York City is not misinterpreted by federal officials as being funding for Long Island.
- Creating a separate MPO would require local officials to band together to convince the governor to authorize it.

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INTRODUCTION

Large infrastructure projects throughout the nation just don't sprout up on their own. They are the result of major planning efforts by state, federal and local governments. The resources allocated for these projects come about in large part through Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs).

In New York City and its surrounding suburbs, including Long Island and the Lower Hudson Valley, the MPO responsible for long term planning is known as the New York Metropolitan Transit Council (NYMTC).

NYMTC provides a collaborative forum to address transportation related issues, develop a long range transportation plan (among other federally mandated products), and make decisions on the use of federal transportation funds.

The council consists of nine voting members and seven advisory members. The voting members are:

- County Executives of Nassau, Putnam, Rockland, Suffolk, and Westchester Counties
- Chief Executive Officer of the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA)
- Commissioner of the New York City, Department of Transportation
- Director of the New York City Department of City Planning
- Commissioner of the New York City Department of Transportation
- Commission of the New York State Department of Transportation

Its vision is laid out in a Plan 2040 white paper adopted September 4, 2013.

It is our contention at the Center for Cost Effective Government that the heavily populated suburbs of New York City, particularly, Long Island, are being shortchanged for their infrastructure projects because they are perceived as having their needs met via the massive amounts of funds overwhelmingly directed toward the five boroughs and its transit system - which come about at the expense of suburban needs.

It is our conclusion that Long Island, with a population of nearly three million people, would be eligible for far more resources if it were to be designated as a separate and independent region whose needs should be considered commensurate with the fact that it would be considered the third largest city in the nation were it a singular governing entity.

In other words, it's time for Long Island to have its very own MPO.

To place the issue in its proper perspective, Long Island with its population of 2.9 million is in between the nation's second largest city, Los Angeles (population 3.8 million) and the third largest, Chicago (population 2.7 million).

However, Long Island receives just a fraction of the resources funneled to these comparable metropolitan areas.

The anticipated revenues in their 2050 plans are \$400 billion for Los Angeles **(1)** and \$517 billion for Chicago respectively **(2)**. (The Chicago plan states: "Adding five reasonably expected revenues to the forecast will make a total of \$517.7 billion available over the planning period, of which 94 percent is necessary to operate, administer, and maintain the system in its current condition.")

The entire NYMTC region on the other hand budgets a whopping \$1.7 trillion (\$906 billion for operating expenses, plus \$750 billion for preservation) through 2050. **(3)**

Many observers might wonder what Long Islanders are whining about. But a closer look shows that the vast majority of the funding goes toward the upkeep and maintenance of the existing New York City transit system.

Yet all of Long Island, with its population of approximately three million people is targeted with a paltry \$11 billion for Operation and Maintenance through 2050, along with just \$1 billion for transit preservation.

A perusal of the NYMTC 2050 plan illustrates how funding is slanted toward transit rather than roadway. The transit allocation throughout New York state is \$837 billion and only \$44 billion for roadways.

Figure 5-1
O&M Costs by Mode
Federally Supported Transportation System
(in millions of YOY dollars)



As detailed in a section below, capital expenditures in NYMTC are directed overwhelmingly to NYC based projects. In fact, four NYC projects alone consumed over \$25 billion in NYMTC allocations.

Additionally, of the seventeen new long term capital projects identified by NYMTC through 2050, totaling \$49 billion, only two, amounting to less than \$1 billion, are based on Long Island - Safety and Environmental Improvements on Route 347 in Suffolk (with little to no road expansion to alleviate traffic), and the Nassau Hub transit initiative.

Major Projects (itemized)		Total \$ Programmed (in billions)
PLAN ID: NSSC650C	NY Route 347 Safety, Mobility and Environmental Improvements	\$0.449 \$0.130
PLAN ID: NYCM2663C	MTA NYCT Second Avenue Subway Phase 2	\$0.435 \$2.575
PLAN ID: NYCM2664C	MTA NYCT Second Avenue Subway Phase 3-4	\$14.964 \$6.015
PLAN ID: MHSDM708C, NYCDM2304C, NSDM2305C	Transportation Systems Management & Operations Programs	\$6.015 \$1.502
PIN: X77338 PLAN ID: NYCQ2361C	Great Streets Vision Zero-Queens Boulevard	\$0.042 \$0.230
PLAN ID: MHSMC767C	Penn Station Access: New Haven Line via Amtrak's Hell Gate Line	\$0.186
PLAN ID: NYCBX2162C	Hunts Point Interstate Access Improvement	\$0.486
PLAN ID: NYCQ386C	Woodhaven Boulevard Select Bus Service - Capital Improvements	\$0.236
PLAN ID: NYCM85413C	Central Business District Tolling Program	\$0.503
PIN: 082498 PLAN ID: NYCMB2411C	Nassau Hub Transit Initiative	\$0.180 \$0.220
PIN: G609/01/AA 09: PLAN ID: NYCMB2411C	Jamaica Capacity Improvements - Phase 2	\$0.14
PLAN ID: NYCMB5127C	ADA Accessibility at Subway Stations	\$0.450 \$4.655

PIN: G609/01/AA 09: PLAN ID: NYCMB2411C	MTA LIRR East Side Access Project	
PLAN ID: NYCQ2707C	Van Wyck Expressway (Interstate 676) Capacity and Access Improvement to JFK Airport	
PLAN ID: NYCQ388C	AirTrain Laguardia Project	
Subtotals		\$7.381 \$16.053 \$26.213
Total		\$49.648

Comparison to Other Large Cities

As noted above, funding allocated to Long Island projects is relatively small. By comparison, the nation's fifth largest city, Houston, Texas has budgeted \$88 billion for its 2040 plan. (4)

The Texan city has a population of 1 million with a metropolis of approximately 4 million people. Unlike Chicago, the nation's third largest city, Houston does not have a subway system.

Yet, Houston anticipates tens of billions of dollars in maintenance, preservation and improvements through its 2040 long-term transportation plan.

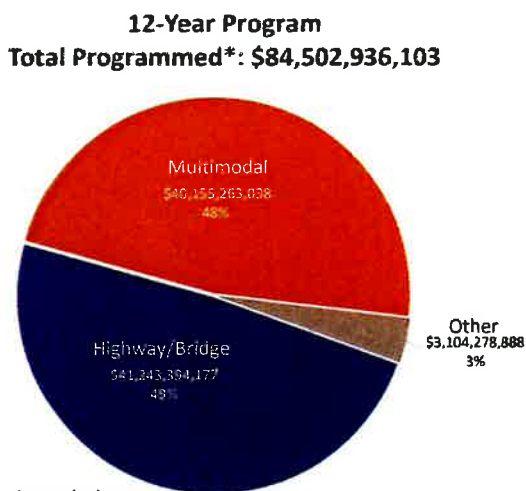
Long Island, which also doesn't have subways, will receive nothing close to this level of funding, if we remove the New York City centric projects under the NYMTC umbrella.

Eighty-eight billion dollars for Long Island's infrastructure can have a transformative effect on the quality of life and the economy on Long Island. Even if an observer were to distinguish Long Island from Chicago, given the Windy City's subway costs, there is little justification for keeping Long Island at a subsidized rate far below that of Houston.

The sixth largest city, Philadelphia, with a population of 1.5 million, formulated a 12-year plan through 2035 wherein it targets \$84.5 billion for its infrastructure needs, which include highway and bridge matters, and multi-modal transportation projects. (5)

The City of Philadelphia Plan

2023 12-Year Program Snapshot



San Francisco, a city of only 800,000 people has a 2050 plan which allocates \$80 billion, plus another \$15 billion for new revenue, for a total of \$95 Billion. (23)

San Antonio has an allocation of \$59 million for a 2050 plan. The city's population is 1.6 million. (49)

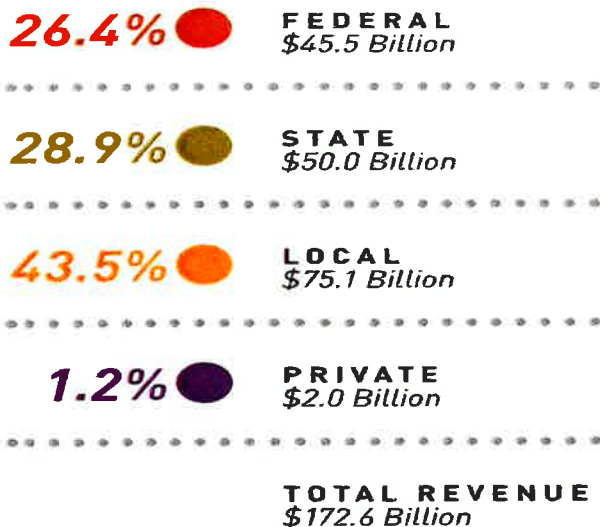
Dallas-Fort Worth has a 2045 plan with an allocation of \$148 Billion. The two cities' population totals 2.3 million people. This is approximately 600,000 less than Long Island, yet the MPO BUdget of Dallas-Fort Worth is twelve times larger than Long Island's budget through 2050.

THE FINANCIAL PLAN BALANCES TO THIS.

Maximize Existing Transportation Systems Strategies	1 Infrastructure Maintenance Maintain and operate existing transit and roadway facilities	\$42.3 B
	2 Management and Operations Improve efficiency and remove trips from system	\$9.6 B
	3 Growth, Development, and Land Use Strategies Improve transportation and land use balance	\$1.5 B
Strategic Infrastructure Investment Strategies	4 Rail and Bus Encourage switch to transit	\$44.9 B
	5 HOV/Managed Lanes Increase auto occupancy	\$49.1 B
	6 Freeways/Tollways and Arterials Add vehicle capacity	
TOTAL		\$148.3 B

Santa Cruz, CA with a population approximately 62,000 is half the size of the town of Smithtown, Long Island, yet has a 2045 plan seeking \$10 billion, with \$5 billion in funds available. (24)

Atlanta, GA has a 2045 plan with an allocation of \$172.6 billion. This is for all twenty counties in its metropolitan area with a population totaling approximately 5.1 million people.



Long Range Plan Costs

State	City	Operation Maintenance Cost	Preservation Cost	New Projects	Total Cost
New York	NYC	\$906 B	\$750 B	\$49 B	\$1.7T 2050
	Long Island	\$11 B	\$1 B	\$700 M	\$12B 2050
Texas	Houston	\$40.48 B	\$26.4 B	\$21 B	\$88B 2040
	Dallas-Fort Worth	\$51.9 B	\$1.5 B		\$148B 2045
	San Antonio	\$10.4 B			\$59B 2050
Illinois	Chicago	\$277.8 B		\$45.6 B	\$517B 2050
California	LA	\$203.6 B		\$27 B	\$400B 2050
	Santa Cruz				\$10B 2045
	San Francisco	\$90.22 B	\$5.5 B		\$95B 2050
Georgia	Atlanta	\$18.41 B	\$29.7 B	\$38.3 B	\$172.6B 2045
Pennsylvania	Philadelphia	\$41.1 B	\$1.247 B		\$84.5 B 2035

Short Term Projects for Long Island

The NYMTC transportation improvement program over the five years spanning 2020-2024 provides additional funding for short term projects. But even when incorporating these figures, Long Island continues to lag behind other cities, even those which are much smaller.

The plan calls for approximately \$233 million to be made available for Nassau's road needs, which include preservation and maintenance for items such as messaging signs, pavement repair, signal expansion, etc. Suffolk, which has a more expansive road system, has \$689 million allocated for that purpose.

Transit needs for the two counties over the five year span are targeted at \$887 million. These figures do not include funding for the MTA or the Long Island Railroad. As noted in this report a mere 7% of the Island's population utilizes the Railroad on a regular basis while nearly every resident utilizes the roadway system in some fashion.

NYMTC's Behemoth Projects

Over the past decade, NYMTC has had four humongous projects in - or connecting to - New York City that monopolized most of the funding.

In fact, these four projects:

Second Avenue Subway,
East Side Access,
Hudson Yard Redevelopment and
World Trade Center Transportation Hub

Account for an astounding figure well exceeding \$25 billion. That leaves little left for the enormous roadway needs on Long Island.

The MTA now has more than \$40 billion in debt on its books and spends more than \$3 billion annually making payments on those bonds. This is in large part due to its massive and inherent operating inefficiencies, but also because of several large capital projects.

An investigation of the East Side Access project in NYC provides the following:

The New York Times found that the cost for the project was likely to surpass \$12 billion, or nearly \$3.5 billion for each new mile of track, seven times the average cost in other cities across the world. **(17, 18, 19)**

According to an analysis of the Second Avenue Subway by the New York Post:

The Second Avenue subway line was supposed to be the first major expansion of the New York City subway in generations — stretching from Hanover Square in the Financial District all the way to 125th Street in East Harlem. So far, the MTA has built just the first leg through the Upper East Side and spent \$4.5 billion in the process.

Three quarters of that, \$3.8 billion, was spent on the design, engineering and construction of the tunnel: \$655 million went to consultants and outside firms; just \$378 million was spent boring the tunnel itself from 63rd Street to 96th Street.

That's double the 5 to 10 percent that transit authorities across Europe — whether in Paris, Rome or Madrid — spend on engineering and designing projects.

The second phase of the Second Avenue Subway through East Harlem is expected to cost \$6 billion, twice as much as the first leg on a per mile basis. **(20, 21)**

The 7-train extension to Hudson Yards cost \$2.4 billion and officials abandoned plans to build a station at 42nd Street and 10th Avenue to contain costs.

Despite New York City overwhelmingly dominating the tens of billions allocated to NYMTC, it did not deter state and city officials from promoting even more behemoth projects for the city. A recent proposal has called for development of a train to plane connection between the Long Island Rail Road and LaGuardia Airport in Queens at a projected cost of \$2.4 billion. The matter is presently on hold as per the governor's directive as alternatives are being considered, but it is illustrative of how insatiable the New York City appetite is for more and more money being funneled into their transit needs, while the needs of Long Island do not keep pace, even on a proportional basis. (22)

Some will say that the East Side Access must be counted as a Long Island project since it offers commuters of the LIRR access to Grand Central Station, as opposed to being forced to traverse across most of Manhattan to Penn Station. They also cite the LIRR third track completed in 2022.

But the fact is that just a small proportion of Long Islanders utilize the Long Island Rail Road (LIRR). There was a time when Long Island was called a bedroom community where 80% of the population traveled to New York City for employment. That number is markedly different today - over 80% of Long Islanders work on the Island. (6)

There are approximately 300,000 commuters from Long Island commuting to areas outside the two counties, the overwhelming majority heading toward New York City. (7)

Of the 20% whose work stations are off Long Island, not all utilize the railroad. The total number of Long Island Rail Road riders is approximately 200,000 individuals on a weekday, which constitutes a mere seven percent of the Long Island population. (8)

AUTHORITY FOR MPOs

According to the New York State Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations:

A metropolitan planning organization (MPO) is, by federal law, designated by the governor of each state to every urban area with at least 50,000 residents. The MPO develops solutions to regional transportation problems and addresses other important issues, such as land-use, air quality, energy, economic development, commerce, and quality of life. Each MPO develops a long-range regional transportation plan to guide transportation decision making and activities. The MPO also develops a short-range program of projects to be implemented with federal transportation funds. For each project, the MPO's responsibility is to engage many stakeholders, including the general public, in the planning process. By creating a vision for the region in the long-range plan and by identifying projects and investments that help achieve that vision, the MPO ensures that scarce federal transportation funds are wisely invested.

According to the United States Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration:

An MPO, its planning boundaries and membership and voting structure, are established and designated by agreement between local officials and the governor (23CFR450.306). This is a state and local choice. Governors and local officials have been encouraged to establish new MPO's or incorporate new urbanized areas within an existing MPO within 12 months of designation.

The FHA further states:

Statewide and metropolitan transportation planning processes are governed by federal law, 23, USC 134 and 135. Applicable state and local laws are required if federal highway or transit funds are used for transportation investments. These planning regulations are codified in 23 CFR 450.

THE NYMTC MISSION

The NYMTC plan states:

In recognition of the size and diversity of the region, NYMTC is comprised of three geographical transportation, coordination, committees, one each in New York City, on Long Island, and in the lower Hudson Valley.

NYMTC's regional transportation plan is a 25 year long-term vision for investing in building sustainable growth in our region and transportation network.

On a daily basis the region's transportation network currently supports approximately 3 Million bus riders, 6.3 million rail rapid transit passengers, 110,000 ferry riders, 143,000 airline passengers and over 200 million vehicle miles driven each day on the region's roads.

NYMTC members have collaboratively identified major regional and local projects and other strategic investments that will expand regional transportation capacity and improve the efficiency, accessibility, integration, and sustainability of existing transportation facilities.

The strategic investments and initiatives outlined in Plan 2040 are focused on preserving the transportation system, enhancing the capacity and accessibility of the system, expanding the reach and integration of the systems, and each is important to the shared vision of sustainable regional growth.

Some of these projects include new transit lines and stations like the Second Avenue Subway from 125th Street to the Financial District in Lower Manhattan and the MTA Long Island Rail Road East Side Access project that will increase capacity into Manhattan's Central Business District from Long Island.

HOW NYMTC FUNDS ARE ALLOCATED

To get a better idea of how funds are allocated within the NYMTC orbit, a perusal of the NYMTC 2040 spending plan finalized in 2013 can prove helpful. (15)

Figure 1 -- O&M Costs by Mode
Federally-Supported Transportation System
Total Projected Cost = \$395.290 billion (YOE)



NOTE Modal breakdown of total projected operations & maintenance (O&M) costs for the federally-supported transportation system based on the current operating budgets of NYMTC's member agencies, as well as any longer-range operational plans they maintain. The O&M costs of System Enhancements in the fiscally-constrained element are included in these estimates in cases where planned enhancements add new components to the system.

The study stated:

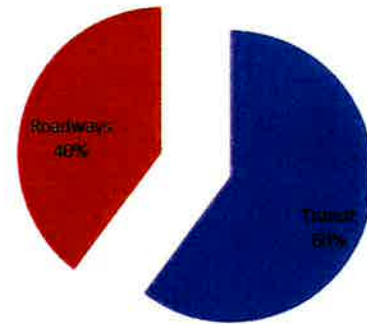
“The transportation system also has to be adequately operated and maintained. It is anticipated that over \$395 billion will be spent on operating and maintaining the regional transportation system through 2040. Of this amount, approximately 92% will be spent on the transit system.”

(It is interesting to note how inflationary pressures have increased projected operating costs from \$395 billion in 2013 to \$906 billion when the 2050 program was crafted in 2021.)

Figure 5 -- System Preservation Costs

Federally-Supported Transportation System

Total Cost = \$266.260 billion (YOE)



NOTE Modal breakdown of total projected System Preservation costs for the federally-supported transportation system. System Preservation projects and strategies proposed for funding in *Plan 2040* for the different transportation system components in NYMTC's planning area were developed using technical models run by the New York State Department of Transportation, as well as the MTA's 2010-2029 Twenty Year Capital Needs Assessment and the capital plans and programs of the other NYMTC member agencies. In building these forecasts, NYMTC's members relied on system preservation goals and methods for prioritizing capital investments that were based on their internal capital budgeting assumptions and policies.

NYMTC also notes:

“Since system preservation (to be distinguished from operation and maintenance) is a top priority for NYMTC it is estimated that over \$161 billion will be spent on the transit system and \$105 billion on the roadway system. This projection was increased to \$750 billion through 2050.

According to NYMTC, the area's transportation system includes:

- Nearly 480 miles of commuter rail
- Nearly 225 Route Miles of Subway tracks
- More than 50,000 lane miles of roads and highways
- 30 major bridges
- 3200 bridges of all types including smaller bridges
- Four major tunnels
- Four commercial airports, plus general aviation, and heliport facilities
- More than 400 route miles of freight rail

The disparity in funding between NYC projects and the surrounding suburbs can be better understood by looking at the projects slated for each region back in 2019.

Distribution of NYMTC money in the 2020-2024 Transportation Improvement Program passed in 2019:

MTA Total Funds \$7.9 Billion

Long Island Railroad \$1.05 billion

Metro North \$684.4 million.

MTA-New York City bus \$186.7 million.

MTA-New York City transit \$5.37 billion.

Balance (with MTA Bus Target) \$676.58 million

New York City DOT \$208.65 million

Westchester \$104 million.

Rockland \$37.2 million.

Putnam \$4.59 million

Nassau \$65.43 million

Suffolk \$61.84 million

(16)

Note the total amount for Nassau and Suffolk is just \$127 million for non LIRR related transit needs.

Long Island plus the other suburbs equals \$282 million.

The total for New York City, excluding Long Island Rail Road and Metro North, is \$6.2 billion, meaning that New York City gets a budget forty nine times as big as the target for Nassau/Suffolk transit excluding the LIRR, and five times larger when including the Railroad.

LONG ISLAND ROADS

Meanwhile, there are numerous roadway projects desperately needed on Long Island that have been going nowhere for decades.

Among them are:

The Oakdale Merge in mid-Suffolk
Route 347 in north Suffolk
Sagtikos Parkway in western Suffolk
The Nassau Hub

Other needed projects requested by local advocates include:

Meadowbrook Parkway/Southern State Parkway interchange reconstruction
Northern State Parkway expansion (added travel lane from Wantagh Parkway to Rte 110)
Southern State Parkway safety capacity improvements
Long Island Parkway drainage study

For 20 years, motorists on the south shore of Suffolk County have had to struggle through gridlock encountered at the infamous Oakdale merge. When Sunrise Highway, one of the few thruways on the south fork of Long Island was expanded to remove traffic lights, traffic flow enhancement was hampered dramatically due to the fact that environmentalists halted the extension of the Sunrise Highway service roads that ran adjacent to the main highway.

The extension was stopped at the point the highway comes upon the Connetquot State Park. The park is a huge swath of open space. There was absolutely no reason why a small service road could not have continued through the length of Sunrise Highway.

It was seen as a minor inconvenience to discontinue the service road at this location. In actuality, it resulted in horrific gridlock. All those traveling on the two service lanes would now have to merge into the other three lanes that flowed continuously from the Hamptons through Nassau County.

The result was 20 minutes of gridlock during the rush-hour. For a commuter that meant 40 minutes of wasted time during a daily commute. And it was totally unnecessary. There is no reason why NYMTC should not be funding these extended service roads, so that these thousands of commuters can spend more time with their families.

The Sagtikos Parkway is one of the main north-south thoroughfares in western Suffolk County. It provides access to the towns of Huntington, Babylon and Smithtown for thousands of motorists. The parkway consists of two lanes in each direction. This is wholly inadequate given the fact that it is the only north-south thruway in western Suffolk.

Numerous big box store developments have surfaced along the route, which has exacerbated the gridlock. There is a significant need for an extra third lane to alleviate the traffic congestion. The request for funding has been on the table for a decade and a half with no progress being made.

Route 347 is one of the only major east-west routes on the north shore of Suffolk County. It has two lanes in each direction, but it is not a thruway. There are lights at every intersection. The traffic crawls at a paltry pace during the rush-hour. Overpasses are desperately needed. While community opposition has been a factor in preventing traffic relief, there has also been a reticence in allocating the type of funding that would be needed to make it a proper thruway.

Some funding is available within the 2020-2024 project for a study of the Oakdale merge and for some smaller projects on 347, but not nearly enough to get these projects on a path toward the overall needed improvements necessary in the near term to deal with the enormous congestion on these roads

Long Island roadways are plagued with congestion. From 1970 to 2010 Long Island saw a population increase of 65%. The current road infrastructure was never designed to support such a large population.

Nassau County motorists have experienced delays close to 50 minutes per day. This was illustrated in a 2017 study by NYMTC, wherein it was further stated the congestion delay will exceed one-hour by 2045. **(25)**

LONG ISLAND COMES UP SHORT

When we compare Long Island to other cities on long-term planning, previously approved projects, or present short-term operation and maintenance allocations, New York's eastern suburb comes up short in every situation.

2022 Budgets

As we have seen above, the amount of funding dedicated towards long-term capital projects from MPOs in New York City and around the country eclipses by leaps and bounds such funding designated for the three million people on Long Island.

A sizable disparity also exists when we look at the funding available in the fiscal year 2022-23 for the major cities contrasted to Long Island.

The massive amount of funding flowing to the cities through their MPOs frees up money these governments can inject into their transit and highway systems.

Contrast operating budgets in Nassau and Suffolk counties to four other large cities nationwide.

Nassau's operating expenses are \$183.5 million, while Suffolk's is even lower at \$75 million.

Contrast this with the \$1.75 billion dedicated to Chicago's transit system **(11, 12)**; the \$1.52 billion for Philadelphia; the nation's fifth most extensive transit system; or San Francisco's \$1.4 billion, despite having only 1/4 of Long Island's population.

The amount allocated on an annual basis for transit matters in Los Angeles is approximately \$8.8 billion. **(10)**

Houston is able to fund its operational budget at \$855 million (out of a total transportation budget of \$1.8 billion), thanks to federal aid and other sources. Atlanta, a city of only 504,000, has a transit system funded with \$557 million.

But the lack of funding for Long Island truly comes to light when one compares it to the Los Angeles' operating expenses of \$2.5 billion (of its total transportation budget of \$8 billion) and New York's MTA, which has an annual budget of \$18.5 billion, with \$4.1 billion reserved for operating expenditures.

The amount spent by the New York City Metropolitan Transit Authority is approximately \$19.2 billion. **(13, 14)**

The New York City Department of Transportation, which is separate from the MTA, has an annual budget of \$1.1 billion. It also has a five-year capital program allocating \$10.4 billion (and a ten-year capital wish list of \$33 billion).

New York City is three times Long Island's population yet has a transit operating budget that is almost 15 times as large as the suburb.

Due to a lack of access to mass transit on Long Island, residents are left to rely on their automobiles. The inadequate road network leads to massive traffic gridlock, which eats into a person's discretionary time, family obligations and quality of life. Moreover, time is money and the longer a company's truck idles stranded in traffic, the less efficient that company will be.

It is therefore essential that Long Island receive the type of funding that is commensurate with a region as populated as Chicago or Los Angeles.

The same type of disparity exists when we look at annual roadway construction for these regions.

Here as well the amount of funding dedicated towards long-term capital projects from MPOs in New York City and around the country - even for those cities with far smaller population- dwarfs such funding designated for the three million people on Long Island.

The massive amount of funding that flows to the cities through their MPOs frees up money for these governments to inject into their transit and highway systems.

Due to a lack of direct funding to Nassau County from NYMTC for the county's road infrastructure, Nassau was able to budget just \$12.8 million for its highway needs in 2022. Meanwhile, the county of Santa Cruz, CA, with a population of 267,000 was able to allocate \$16.7 million. San Francisco was able to budget \$22 million for its highways, while Los Angeles kicked in \$477 million for each highway needs.

2022 Metro Spending by City

City	Transit (Bus) Budget	Highway Budget	Total Budget
NYC	\$4.1 Billion		\$18.5 Billion (26)
LI Nassau County	\$183.5 Million (28) 15.160 Million yr'23 (CAP) (53)	\$18.3 Million [OP] (29) 36.403 Million yr'23 (CAP) (53)	\$253.363 Million
LI Suffolk County	\$75 Million (27)	\$8.2 Million [OP] (51) \$118.6 million (CAP) (52)	\$201.8 Million
Houston	\$740.5 Million		\$1.8 Billion (38, 39, 40)
Austin			\$90.6 Million (41)

Philadelphia			\$1.52 Billion (31)
Dallas-Fort Worth			\$580.4 Million (32)
San Antonio			\$259.4 Million (42, 43)
Chicago			\$1.75 Billion (30)
LA	\$2.5 Billion	\$477 million	\$8 Billion (33)
Santa Cruz		\$16.7 Million	\$54.8 Million (37)
San Francisco		\$22 Million	\$1.4 Billion (36)
Atlanta			\$557 Million (34, 35)

New York City is three times Long Island's population yet has a transit budget that is almost 15 times as large as the suburbs.

INADEQUATE BUS FUNDING ON LONG ISLAND

Nearly 100% of Long Islanders are utilizing Long Island's woefully inadequate road network. The public transportation system on Long Island is dismal, especially in the less densely populated Suffolk County, which has approximately the same population as neighboring Nassau, but triple the square mileage.

The total amount spent on Suffolk's bus transportation system is approximately \$75 million. (9)

The question about bus funding on Long Island has been a contentious one for decades. There is an especially big concern from Suffolk residents who feel shortchanged regarding the amount of federal and state assistance for its bus system.

In 2021, Nassau County received \$86 million in transit aid from the state, while Westchester received \$71 million. Suffolk got \$33 million. (44)

The debate is really one of the chicken and the egg. The state claims that Suffolk receives less money than Nassau because there are fewer users. Suffolk officials counter that there are fewer users because there is less money flowing into the system, and therefore lower availability for bus riders.

Suffolk has a slightly larger population than Nassau, and thrice the square miles, yet receives far less transit aid than their neighbors to the west (which, in turn, receives less than the smaller Westchester County).

Nassau County's bus program has a fleet of 278 natural gas buses on 38 fixed routes. It also has 108 paratransit vehicles. Suffolk Transit has a fixed route system of 32 routes using 113 buses and 235 cutaway buses.

Certainly, it is more difficult to establish a viable bus system when the population is less densely populated, but Suffolk is host to one and a half million people, which makes it bigger than 11 states. And yet it is funded as though it is a small town.

This inadequate funding has severe ramifications on the Long Island population, especially the poor and working class. As noted in an August 1st, 2023 Newsday article, a large sector of the Long Island population depends on the transit system, which simply does not meet the current need. Due to inadequate funding, transit users often wait over an hour for a needed bus. Service on Sundays is extremely lacking.

The need for more funding was illustrated in the following passage:

Long Island was built up as a bedroom community centered on cars as the predominant mode of travel, but population and job growth have shifted land and transportation needs. There are more transit-oriented developments, multi-home communities and people working in the region as opposed to going to Manhattan, according to Tiffany-Ann Taylor, vice president of transportation at the Regional Plan Association, a nonprofit group based in Manhattan.

And while the last couple of decades have led to increased transportation infrastructure and investments — most recently with the LIRR’s Third Track, a 10-mile stretch of new track through Nassau to a second Manhattan hub, Grand Central Madison — transportation experts said there still aren’t optimal routes that run north and south. Riders said bus service in both counties is lacking and unreliable.

For public transportation to work, it needs to be dependable, affordable and efficient. But on Long Island, that’s often not the case, several riders and experts said **(50)**

The poor and working class in parts of New York City have far greater access to a dependable transit system than do their counterparts on Long Island. In some cases, workers can even walk to their workplace destinations. This is unheard of on Long Island. A separate Long Island MPO would take the poor on Long Island out of the shadow of the city, giving them the fair treatment, they deserve. Significant traffic gridlock on Long Island, resulting from inadequate funding from the federal government for road maintenance and expansion, inhibits maximized bus transportation. **(45)**

Under the Local Economic Acceleration Plan (LEAP), Nassau is looking to add a Bus Rapid Transit Hub (BRT) connecting to the Nassau Hub. This would create links to areas in Nassau where the lack of road infrastructure has led to critical areas of activity being under-served.

One such challenge the new system faces is the lack of funding. NYMTC in 2016 estimated the proposal to cost \$95 million for the BRT and Nassau Hub link. Of the estimated \$95 Million only \$11 million is from federal aid received over four years from 2017-2021. **(46)**

Potential benefits of BRTs can be seen in Indianapolis and in Westchester County. Indianapolis saw an increase of 33% in new office space in seven years when the BRT was within a half-mile walk to the office. Within that half-mile multi-family homes doubled in construction in the same time frame. An increase in wages was also reported, along with 170,000 workers living within walking distance of the BRT in Indianapolis. In Westchester, the BRT was created in conjunction with a new development project in Ridge Hill. Within one **(1)** year the ridership for the BRT had doubled exceeding 300,000 people using the new BRT lines. **(47, 48)**

As seen above the amount of transit aid allocated for Long Island is dwarfed by that designated for New York City. That is in part due to the city’s remarkably high density and its history of mass transit planning dating back over a century.

But even much younger cities with light density still reap in far more aid for their transit systems than does Long Island. Once again, this can be traced back to the way MPO funds are allocated. Federal planners look at the humongous dollars thrown toward New York’s NYMTC and believe they’ve covered the needs of Nassau and Suffolk. Meanwhile, they look at Philadelphia, San Francisco and Santa Cruz, with far smaller population than Long Island, as cities unto themselves.

CREATING A NEW MPO FOR LONG ISLAND

So now that we've established that the Long Island region would benefit by having its own MPO, how does the region go forth to implement such a reform?

It won't be easy. But it is doable.

The law firm of Campolo Middleton McCormick was engaged several years ago to determine the steps that would be necessary to create a new MPO from an existing one. It appears that it would require obtaining the permission of the governor and members of the existing MPO.

Issue: Whether Long Island can form its own Metropolitan Planning Organization ("MPO") and cease being part of NYMTC.

Brief Conclusion: New York law does not provide a mechanism for the formation of additional MPO's and simply provides that existing MPO's shall remain in place and that no other planning organizations need to be formed. However, pursuant to the Federal statute governing MPO's, more than 1 MPO may be designated within an existing metropolitan planning area only if the Governor and the existing MPO determine that the size and complexity of the existing metropolitan planning area make designation of more than 1 MPO for the area appropriate. Thus, it seems as though proponents would have to get the consent of the Governor and NYMTC to create a Long Island MPO.

Analysis: 23 U.S.C. § 134 governs the formation and purpose of MPO's, while 23 U.S.C. § 135 sets forth the development of statewide plans and programs that each MPO must establish. Pursuant to 23 U.S.C. § 134(d)(1)(A), a MPO can be designated for each urbanized area with a population of more than 50,000 individuals by agreement between the Governor and units of general purpose local government that together represent at least 75 percent of the affected population or in accordance with state or local laws. Thus, because Long Island has more than 50,000 people, proponents would need the agreement of both County Executives (to satisfy the requirement of having an agreement of local government officials representing 75% of the affected population) along with the Governor.

However, there is no independent mechanism under New York law to designate a new metropolitan planning area. Pursuant to Article 2, section 15-A of the New York Transportation Law (see link below),

[i]n each urbanized area in which a public transportation system provides services, the existing metropolitan planning organization designated as such by the governor for the purpose of complying with federal statutes, shall be the metropolitan planning organization for the purposes of this section ...
[i]n all other areas, no such planning organization need be formed.

Thus, it seems as though proponents will have to petition the Governor and NYMTC to form a new MPO for Long Island pursuant to 23 U.S.C. § 134(d)(6).

Under 23 USC §134(d)(6), more than 1 MPO may be designated within an existing metropolitan planning area only if the Governor and the existing MPO determine that the size and complexity of the existing metropolitan planning area make designation of more than 1 MPO for the area appropriate. Thus, assuming the Governor and the New York legislature do not want to designate Long Island as its own metropolitan planning area, with the consent of the Governor and NYMTC, Long Island can still form its own MPO.

CONCLUSION.

Long Island has a population bigger than 16 states. If it were a city, it would be the third largest in the nation, surpassed only by New York, and Los Angeles.

The amount of funding Long Island receives for its transportation needs are a fraction of what large cities throughout the nation receive.

This is so primarily because Long Island's transportation plans fall under the umbrella of the entire New York City metropolitan area. Thus, when billions are allocated towards city-centric projects, many assume that these improvements can be tallied under the list of Long Island enhancements .

But the old days when most Long Islanders relied on the city transportation network is long gone. Today the overwhelming majority of Long Islanders work on the Island and rarely use the city system. Substantial funds are directed toward the Long Island Rail Road, but it appears to be a poor argument that such funding satisfies the needs of Long Islanders when a mere seven percent of the Island's population utilizes the LIRR.

Long Island's bus system is remarkably inadequate, largely due to insufficient aid. More state and federal assistance is desperately needed, but with the Island's lighter population density vis-a-vie many cities, even a vastly enhanced bus system can only do so much.

Ultimately, a significantly expanded road network appears to be the primary remedy to the region's transportation woes. The Island's road network was constructed based on a far lower population. State and Federal aid for the region must reflect today's reality.

Long Island would benefit greatly from having its own metropolitan planning organization so that the funding it receives can be compared apples to apples to other regions of comparable size.

The steps to establish a new MPO will be dependent on local leadership petitioning the governor to initiate the application for the creation of a separate Long Island MPO.

Long Island advocacy groups, including the Long Island Association, Long Island Contractors Association, the Long Island Builders Institute, Association for a Better Long Island, Vision Long Island and similar entities should coalesce the form of lobbying movement to make this endeavor a reality

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