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## **Long Island Road Warriors Gather to Advocate for State Funding To Fix Key Regional Roads**

### **LICA and leading elected officials send Albany a budget message: “Save our Streets”**

In the wake of President Trump’s current Infrastructure budget, the Long Island Contractor’s Association (LICA) and leading advocates of a robust and well-maintained highway infrastructure today called upon sustained state funding to repair and rehabilitate critical Long Island roadways during a news conference along Route 347, Nesconset.

LICA Executive Director Marc Herbst stated, “Allies and advocates of a strong transportation infrastructure have joined together along a stretch of Long Island road to send a message. Route 347 has long been recognized as crucial to our economy and very much in need of repair and yet continued reconstruction of this road is still not in the state budget. If you expect Long Island to do its job of helping power the state economy the state needs to do its job of repairing this and other key road projects.”

#### **Advocates speak out**

A delegation of infrastructure advocates from elective office, labor, and business included Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone, New York Assemblymen Mike Fitzpatrick and Steven Englebright, Brookhaven Supervisor Ed Romaine and Smithtown Supervisor Ed Wehrheim.

County Executive Bellone stated, “If you want to see great things happen in our state, invest in Long Island because we have incredible potential which can only be unlocked with infrastructure investment.”

Assemblyman Fitzpatrick warned, “I learned at a very young age that when you start a project you don’t stop till you’re finished. I don’t think the state of New York would have built 40% of the Kosciusko Bridge and Mario Cuomo Bridge and stopped half way into it. The State DOT and the road construction workers are to be commended for what has been done already but there is far more to go. The New York State delegation needs to remember the way to stimulate the Long Island economy is through investment into infrastructure and appropriate the funds needed to complete the rest of this 15 mile span of this vital roadway.”

New York State Assemblyman Steve Englebright observed, “The ‘Greener Route 347’ Project is a visionary highway design that places emphasis on Route 347 to be both an effective arterial as well as a green boulevard complete with pedestrian-friendly features, bikeway, pocket parks, and plantings of premium shrubs and trees. The project began in Smithtown in 2010 and has been working its way east with 4.3 miles already completed. Residents in my district have been eagerly awaiting the arrival of the next phases of this green project. With more than 10 miles still to build out, it now appears that the state has not included any funding for the remaining 70% of the project in the current 5-year capital program. We need to finish what we begin and find the money to keep the promise of a Greener Route 347.”

“The success and growth of Long Island’s economy relies heavily on its infrastructure,” said Brookhaven Town Supervisor Ed Romaine. “We can no longer stand by while roads like Route 347 are not safely maintained or modernized to meet the needs of the driving public and the businesses that depend on them. I support LICA’s efforts to lobby the state so that investment in our infrastructure becomes a top priority.”

Smithtown Town Supervisor Ed Wehrheim cautioned, “Our local roads and infrastructure is the foundation for Long Island living on a daily basis. While I commend those visionaries with the foresight to deliver new and bold plans, I believe we have a greater obligation to see out existing projects to fruition.”

### **A coalition of “road warriors”**

The road warrior coalition includes American Automobile Club of America – Northeast (AAA), the American Council of Engineering Companies of New York (ACEC New York), Association for a Better Long Island (ABLI), Building and Construction Trades Council of Nassau & Suffolk (NSBCTC), Hauppauge Industrial Association (HIA-LI), International Brotherhood of Teamsters – Local 282, International Union of Operating Engineers – Local 138, Laborers International Union of North America – New York State (LIUNA), Long Island Association (LIA), Long Island Board of Realtors (LIBOR), Long Island Builders Institute (LIBI), Long Island Contractors’ Association (LICA), Long Island Federation of Labor, Long Island Metro Business Action (LIMBA), Metallic Lathers & Reinforcing Ironworkers – Local 46, National Electrical Contractors Association – Long Island Chapter, Northeast Regional Council of Carpenters, and the Road and Heavy Construction Laborers of Nassau & Suffolk Counties – Local 1298

In an open letter to the Governor and state legislative leaders the coalition noted, “More than 70,000 drivers who take Route 347 daily are now indefinitely ‘stalled’ – stuck in the void between state promises and state funding that never materialized to complete this critical corridor..... Only about 4.3 miles of the approximate 15-mile corridor has been reconstructed and it appears it may remain this way for the foreseeable future unless action is taken.

“Typical of the loss of transportation efficiency for this road, is the fact that while the posted speed limit for its length is 55 mph, average speeds are roughly half of that during peak travel Times. That reduction has a direct and adverse impact on every driver, their productivity, fuel consumption and more. ... (It is an) untenable situation.”

John R. Durso, President of the Long Island Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO, said “Governor Cuomo, Speaker Heastie, and Senate Majority Leader John Flanagan have proven they understand the importance of infrastructure, and the integral part it plays in the economic growth of our region. Today, we stand here with our partners in industry, and community to call on New York State to honor their commitments and see this investment through to its full potential.”

Durso continued, “The expansion of Route 347 through phase one has had a dramatic impact on the lives of commuters throughout our region and the residents of this community. However, it will be wasted dollars if we do not fund the remaining phases of this project. Ultimately, it will endanger the economic vitality of working families, inhibiting their ability to make a living, and have a devastating impact on businesses along this corridor, and thus their workers.”

“Roadways such as Route 347 need to be rebuilt and improved quickly. The safety and mobility of Long Island residents depends upon it. Road, mobility, and safety improvements are not a Democrat or Republican issue and we hope leaders in Albany are able to come together and agree to finance this critically important project to completion.” said John A. Corlett, Legislative Committee Chairman for AAA New York State which serves 2.7 million members.

Mitch Pally, Chief Executive Officer of LIBI, said “The rehabilitation and expansion of our highway system is essential to the economic well-being of all of Long Island. Route 347 is the major roadway on the North Shore of Suffolk County and has seen significant improvements in traffic flow since the state started its improvement program. It is essential for additional funds to be appropriated so that the entire length of route 347 can provide the transportation and economic development benefits necessary for our community.”

Kyle Strober, Executive Director of ABLI, "Infrastructure and economic development go hand and hand. A fully reconstructed Route 347 will be a boon, not just to the commercial properties along the corridor but to all the surrounding communities along this 14 mile stretch."

“Upgrading roadways on Long Island such as Route 347 are essential to the foundation of the region’s economy, said Randy Kaplan, VP of Government Affairs and Chief Lobbyist, LIBOR. Having first rate infrastructure will keep Long Island as a destination for future businesses and provide our current residents with safe and reliable means of commuting.”

### **Approaching a decade**

Herbst observed, “The President’s proposal to streamline the federal permitting process for projects so it doesn’t take more than two years stands in stark contrast to the reality that some Long Island road projects have been on the drawing board for ten to twenty years. More than absurd, that’s unconscionable.”

Reconstruction of NY Route 347 began in August, 2010 and as of December, 2017 only 4.3 miles of the 15-mile corridor has been completed. There is no funding for the remaining 70% of the project in the current five year capital program.

LICA urges all LI residents to find out more about the local projects in their area and to express their support. For more information, visit: [www.fixthisLIroad.com](http://www.fixthisLIroad.com)

### **About LICA**

LICA represents the interests of over 170 of Long Island's region's premier heavy construction general contractors, subcontractors, suppliers and industry supporters. Focused primarily in the transportation infrastructure construction industry, such as highways, bridges, rails, sewers and other public works, LICA's member companies play a significant role within Long Island's Nassau and Suffolk Counties. The economic impact of the industry contributes \$4 billion to the local region's gross regional product.