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SUMMER 2021

ROAD WARRIORS

A publication of the Long Island Contractors' Association

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Edwards**

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Long Island ROAD WARRIORS

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Long Island ROAD WARRIORS is the official magazine of the Long Island Contractors' Association, Inc. (LICA). LICA represents the interests of the region's premier heavy construction general contractors, subcontractors, suppliers and industry supporters. Focused primarily in the transportation infrastructure construction industry such as highways, bridges, rail, 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 area's local gross regional product.

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Room for Improvement

Fifteen years ago, I was chosen by LICA's board to lead our association. At that time I was serving as the Executive Project Manager for the New York State Thruway's environmental study to replace the Tappan Zee Bridge. That project was one of the greatest experiences of my career. I was fortunate to have worked with some of the most talented professionals from across the globe.

The TZ study had its fair share of frustrations and challenges, yet every successful milestone was met with motivation to do even better. "There's always room for improvement!" was the repetitive cheer we would hear, in a unique accent, from Leon Zelazny, a program engineer with the consulting engineering firm Earth Tech Inc. (now part of AECOM). Like so many others, Leon came to this country as an immigrant, armed only with his drive, determination, a good work ethic and an unwavering commitment to succeed. With a smile and cheerful demeanor, Leon constantly inspired others to aim higher and remind us that "there's always room for improvement!"

Three years ago, I testified before a New York State Senate joint committee regarding the state's Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise (MWBE) program. During my testimony I recalled the history of one of LICA's prominent member firms, Scalamandre & Sons. This multi-generational, family business was started in 1923 by Peter Scalamandre, who immigrated to America from Scaliti, Italy, with nothing but strong hands and a willingness to work hard. When he arrived, he began building brick homes on Long Island, but soon fell ill. His son, Joe, had no choice but to take charge of the family business at the age of 16. Along with his brother and partner Fred, they built the business into one of Long Island's premier heavy construction firms. Peter's grandson and namesake, Peter, now heads the successful business enterprise.



My testimony noted that "the Scalamandre legacy is like those of many businesses in the construction industry...companies started by immigrants with limited resources and, quite frankly in many instances, little respect or support from their new neighbors." That history and experience remain an underpinning in our industry's fabric. The heavy construction industry was, and continues to be, a leader in supporting others who face obstacles in reaching their full potential. This is why LICA and our members continue to support programs that assist minorities, women and the disadvantaged.

While we support these initiatives, we also know "there's always room for improvement!" In this edition of Long Island Road Warriors, we are proud to highlight several MWBE/SDVOB-certified LICA member firms who serve as an inspiration for success. We hope others will emulate them, as our industry works to find more ways to enhance opportunities for disadvantaged businesses.

Our cover subject, New York State Public Service Commissioner Tracey Edwards, is one of our region's most experienced, effective and revered advocates. When she's not working to ensure reasonable utility rates or protect the environment, she's busy fighting for equity, inclusion and opportunity for people of color and businesses in marginalized communities. We invite you to read her story and thoughtfully consider her comments. We hope you'll be impressed by her dedication and inspired to advance the cause.

Sincerely,

Marc Herbst, Executive Director
Long Island Contractors' Association





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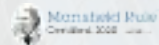
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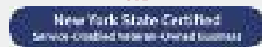
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M/W/DBE Compliance – A Plan & Program Are Important

by Erik Ortmann, Partner - Kaufman Dolowich Voluck

Most contractors are familiar by now with diversity goals for the use of certified Minority, Women or Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (M/W/DBEs) in many public and even some private contracts. Having a company plan, process and training program are crucial to successful compliance with M/W/DBE rules and requirements.

Compliance Program

A company should look to establish a structure, training, and controls to best understand, manage and administer diversity requirements in contracts. It would be best to set and define roles/responsibilities that specific individuals will fill to ensure compliance as part of an overall company program, and on each contract. For example, a Compliance Officer might manage the overall M/W/DBE Program while a Project Manager would be accountable to keep a specific project in compliance with diversity requirements, and to report issues up the chain. Companies should also look to have personnel trained on basic M/W/DBE rules, requirements, and key areas such as good faith efforts to contract with certified firms, credits toward goals, utilization plan submission, ensuring certified firms serve a commercially useful function, and proper communication with owners/agencies regarding M/W/DBE compliance. Note a few key compliance areas that might be included in any compliance program information/training.

Goals and Requirements

Contract diversity goals will be DBE (federal) or MWBE (state or local). The goals are generally based on the particular government entity funding the contract and the bid packages should be clear on which goals apply. There is no mixing permitted. For example, an MBE cannot be credited toward a DBE goal. Note that the goals are targets not quotas, and an agency/owner is prohibited from demanding/requiring that a contractor fully meet a goal if a contractor shows that sufficient/proper good faith efforts were made and the goal cannot be fully met.

Good Faith Efforts (GFE)

The contractor must have a plan to solicit, identify, bid to and contract with certified firms and the efforts must be documented. A company's Compliance Program should include a checklist of GFEs to make and staff should be trained on the need to make and document GFE.

Utilization Plan & Credits

The utilization plan shows the agency/owner the certified firms being used to meet the contract goals. It is important to determine how the credits will be calculated and applied to meet the contract goals (DBE, M/WBE state or local), as allowable credits may vary based on the type of goal or contract. The contractor must know when the utilization plan should be submitted in the bidding process, and the plan cannot be a wish-list but rather an expected use of certified firms. Company staff should have a breakdown of the credit and counting rules that apply under federal, state, and local rules/laws and be trained in the rules, and in the formation and submission of a utilization plan.

Commercially Useful Function (CUF)

CUF has to do with the requirement for legitimate certified firms to actually perform the work they were contracted for. Companies should have a system/checklist in place to vet certified firms before contracting with them and to monitor their project work. Company staff should be trained as to areas of concern (red flags) to look for in ensuring CUF compliance.

M/W/DBE rules/laws can be confusing and compliance requirements can be challenging at every stage and level of a project and a contractor's business. A compliance program provides the training, knowledge and structure for contractors to meet the challenges and gain an advantage in the competitive public contracting market. Our firm has worked with contractors to develop programs, create template documents, and train staff, and we have witnessed how M/W/DBE compliance planning and programs yield positive results.



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The Construction Industry Has a Tax Credit to Build On

by Barry Fischman, Construction Services Tax Leader, Marcum LLP

The Research and Development (R&D) Tax Credit was created in 1981 to encourage businesses to invest in the development of new or improved business components in order to promote economic growth in the United States. Thousands of companies from diverse industries benefit from this tax incentive. The R&D tax credit provides over \$10 billion of tax savings to U.S. businesses annually, although it is underutilized, particularly by small and medium-sized companies. Many states also have R&D-type credits that follow federal qualification guidelines.

The federal R&D Tax Credit provides significant benefits to taxpayers with up to 10% of qualifying expenses (eligible wages, contractor costs and supplies). This benefit is a potential one-for-one reduction in tax liability for the current and prior three years. Accordingly, the credit can provide immediate and long-term tax liability relief in 2020 that increases cash flow and capital for construction companies.

Recent changes in law under the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) of 2017 and 2015 Protecting Americans from Tax Hikes (PATH) Act have made the R&D credit even more lucrative by providing taxpayers potentially larger credits for tax years ending post-December 31, 2017. No changes in the R&D benefit or its availability are noted in the 2020 Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The above regulatory changes make the R&D credit a very powerful tool in reducing a contractor's tax liability and increasing cash flow.

Construction Industry Considerations

The R&D credit is an investment subsidy and is available to businesses in most industries, including construction. Eligible companies may amend their prior three years' tax returns with up to 10% of qualifying investment and, thus, may generate significant federal tax refunds. Most states have related R&D credits that can provide immediate refund opportunities as well.

Marcum has been successful in helping clients maximize the tax benefit from the R&D tax credit. Recent examples include:

- \$300 million Construction Subcontractor – federal benefit exceeding \$300k on an annual basis
- \$70 million Construction Concrete Manufacturer – federal benefit exceeding \$110k on annual basis
- \$59 million Specialty Building Designer & Manufacturer – federal benefit exceeding \$900k on multi-year credit claim
- \$200 million Specialty Asphalt & Concrete Manufacturer – federal and state benefits exceeding \$500k on multi-year credit claim
- Large Specialty Construction Contractor – federal and state benefit exceeding \$2 million per year
- \$10 million Architecture & Engineering Designer – federal benefit exceeding \$50k per year

The construction industry successes noted above are primarily the result of the contractors assuming more risk and increasing design responsibility. The industry has also moved toward using innovative construction materials to create higher-performing, more reliable, energy-efficient, higher-quality structures. Owners, architects, and engineers continue to raise the bar on innovation and cost containment. This drives the expectation for contractors to develop new processes and engineering solutions - activities that could qualify for the R&D credit.

Building Integrated Modeling (BIM) allows all project designers to work as a team and identify design conflicts at the outset. The level of advanced design capability enables the team to design new structures and incorporate systems that have never been accomplished before. New design technologies are creating new possibilities of what can be manufactured and built. Advanced 3-D printer applications and BIM are enabling designers to create a new generation of products, goods and building structures.

Large mechanical, electrical, plumbing (MEP) and fire protection/security system contractors have used 3-D CAD (three-dimensional computer-aided design) software to illustrate their distribution systems and create fabricated systems. Architects and engineering (A&E) firms have been using 2-D CAD systems for years. Time constraints are such that both the building and systems design teams are designing concurrently. A&E firms and contractors are typically working independently; they cannot be certain that these systems will actually fit together upon installation.

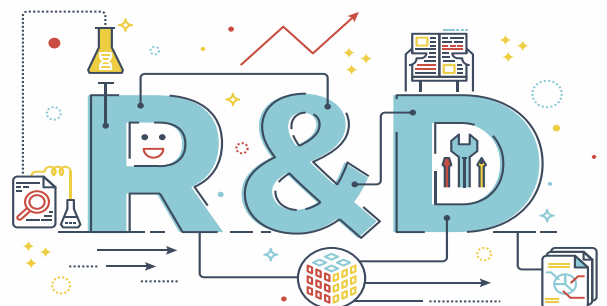
Pursuant to Internal Revenue Code Section 41, qualifying activities include all research expenditures towards a new or improved product, process, or internally developed software and other technologies. Successful efforts are great, but expenditures for failures count equally as well!

In summary, the R&D tax credit is an opportunity that the construction industry can leverage well into the future.

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Women Economic Developers of Long Island

by Judy White, Legislative Chair & Past President



Women Economic Developers of Long Island (WEDLI) is dedicated to promoting and assisting in the growth of economic development in Nassau and Suffolk counties. Founded in 1984, WEDLI is a unique and specialized organization whose members are selected from top level executives in the fields of banking, finance, accounting, commercial real estate, real estate development, engineering, marketing, government and law, along with business owners, investors and entrepreneurs.

WEDLI's membership impacts every area of economic development for Long Island from infrastructure development to not-for-profit organizations to transportation and education.

WEDLI holds monthly meetings which provide a forum of education and information sharing through guest speakers in the business sector, government and the not-for-profit arena. Each of our monthly programs are educational and focused on the needs of our members to support business growth. Speakers are prominent in the business, educational, non-profit, development and health care industries and provide our members with actionable information. Members and non-members alike take advantage of exceptional networking opportunities to build professional as well as personal relationships, and advance the objectives of a prosperous and growing Long Island.

From its beginning in 1984 WEDLI members have been involved in many of Long Island's largest infrastructure and real estate projects both from the private side of business to the government side of transactions. Our current membership includes the Director of the Nassau County Office of Housing & Community Development, an attorney who closes hundreds of residential properties for the Housing Trust Fund Corporation NY Rising Housing Recovery Program, a community ambassador for the 3rd Track Project and the owner of a professional consulting firm specializing in civil engineering and land development projects throughout Long Island and the New York Metro area. Many of our companies are WBE/MBE certified both with New York State and the City of New York.

The breadth of our professional expertise is exceptionally strong as commercial and private banks, major Long Island and national title insurance companies, land use and real estate attorneys, commercial banking and lending, accounting professionals and public relations professionals come together to work with each other and the greater Long Island business community.

In addition, WEDLI offers training for business through its relationship with of Stony Brook's Small Business Development Center and insight into the non-profit sector. Long Island Cares and Options for Community Living have both shared their expertise and insight into the not-for-profit world on Long Island and provided volunteer and giving opportunities for WEDLI members.

Our members are dedicated professionals with a broad breadth of expertise in all aspects of development fields. Whether starting the financing, engineering, banking, title work, surveying work or legal aspects of a project always keep WEDLI as a resource.

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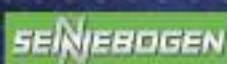


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LICA Member Spotlight

M/W/DBE & SDVOB

The Long Island Contractors' Association (LICA) proudly represents all its members which include many of our region's premier general contractors, subcontractors and suppliers, as well as associate members who provide much needed services and support for the heavy/highway industry.

Many member firms are multi-generational, family-owned businesses that were started decades ago by hard working immigrants who came to this country with nothing but a dream and determination. Their achievements are admirable and we applaud their continued success.

Today, as issues of social and economic injustice and inequity come to light, LICA is committed to continuing our support for and representation of the current and next generation of industry professionals. In particular, those disadvantaged businesses (DBE) which are minority owned (MBE), women owned (WBE) or service-disabled veteran owned (SDVOB). As such, we wanted to take this opportunity to spotlight a few of these firms, hoping it will encourage and inspire others to seek and find success in the transportation infrastructure industry.



Andrew Simmons, President - A&S Rebar



A&S Rebar, Inc.

205 Sills Road, Yaphank, NY 11980

In Business Since: 2014

Principal: Andrew Simmons, President

Primary Business: Rebar Supplier and Fabricator, Supplier of Heavy Construction Materials.

Certifications: NYS MBE/DBE, PANYNJ MBE/DBE & NYC MBE

ABOUT:

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2 Commercial St., Hicksville, NY 11801

In Business Since: 2015

Principals: Connie Zambianchi, P.E., President & Mara Johnston, Partner

Primary Business: Special Inspections Agency and Materials Testing Laboratory.

Certifications: NYS WBE, NYC WBE, PANYNJ DBE/WBE, SBE/SCA & WBE/DBE

ABOUT:

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Mara Johnston, Partner & Connie Zambianchi, P.E., President - Amaracon



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Lisa Cassone, Executive Vice President & Lynn Cassone, President - Cassone



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Certifications: NYS/NYC/NJ WBE, PANYNJ WBE/DBE, WBE/DBE for North Carolina

ABOUT:

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For more information:

Phone: 631.585.7800

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www.cassone.com



Hayduk Engineering, LLC

1010 Route 112, Suite 200
Port Jefferson Station, NY 11776

In Business Since: 1984

Principal: Stephen G. Hayduk, P.E., Managing Member

Primary Business: Civil, Highway, Water and Wastewater Engineering, Site Planning, Stormwater Management and Construction Administration Services.

Certifications: NYS SDVOB

ABOUT:

Hayduk Engineering, LLC is a multi-disciplinary firm that has provided engineering services on Long Island for over 37 years. Our major disciplines are civil engineering, water and wastewater engineering, site planning, highway engineering, stormwater management, and construction administration services. We have developed a strong reputation in these areas over the years. Review of the current and past projects of the

firm exemplifies our diversity. We enjoy true engineering, including attacking and solving problems which are new and unique.

Hayduk Engineering currently employs over 30 engineers, technologists, and inspectors. We serve clients in both the private and public sectors, ranging from land developers, institutions and private owners, to governmental agencies at all levels of the public sector. A respected leader in the region, Hayduk Engineering prides itself in providing insightful, quality, cost effective work product to its clients.

For more Information:

Phone: 631.476.0600

sah@haydukengineering.com

www.haydukengineering.com



Stephen G. Hayduk, P.E.
Managing Member - Hayduk Engineering

Continued on next page

Marissa O'Neill, President - Island Pavement Cutting Co.



Island Pavement Cutting Co., Inc.

84 Kean St., W. Babylon, NY 11704

In Business Since: 1966

Principal(s): Marissa O'Neill, President

Primary Business: Heavy/Highway & Specialty Construction Services.

Certifications: DBE/WBE/SBE for multiple jurisdictions. See website.

ABOUT:

Island Pavement Cutting Co., Inc. maintains a place on the leading edge of infrastructure, commercial building and maintenance marketplaces, providing the highest quality and ably delivering projects safely, on-time and within budget. IPCC is a certified Disadvantaged/Women Owned/Small Business. Since our founding in 1966, four generations have expertly guided IPCC in establishing a diverse offering of Specialty Contractor services for numerous federal, state and commercial sectors.

At Island Pavement, we believe that inclusion and diversity in all our actions

is an important value. We are an Equal Opportunity Employer with an Affirmative Action Commitment. We recognize that, to excel as a business, we must continue to hire the best talent and secure the full participation and commitment of all employees, regardless of race, color, religion, creed, gender identity or any other such characteristic.

For more Information:

Phone: 631.567.2711

info@islandpavement.com

www.islandpavement.com



Our Rental Pumps

68 Allen Blvd., Farmingdale, NY 11735

In Business Since: 2011

Principal: Samantha Ruttura, President

Primary Business: Equipment Rental Company, Specializing in Heavy Equipment, Concrete Placing Equipment and Rotating Handlers.

Certifications: NYS WBE, PANYNJ DBE/WBE, NYC WBE & NYS ESD

ABOUT:

Our Rental Pumps is a Long Island based equipment rental company. We are known for our Concrete Pump and Tebelts rentals but as we grow, our equipment selection is expanding. We now offer Caterpillar Excavators, Attenuator Trucks and Magni Telescopic Handlers. As a dealer for Magni, Schwing, Putzmeister and Construction Forms, we offer sales and repairs on their equipment, as well as parts.

As we continue to grow our plan is to add more heavy equipment, mini excavators and skid steers to our ever-growing fleet. We are one of the few WBE certi-

Samantha Ruttura, President - Our Rental Pumps



fied equipment rental companies in the New York Area, offering our customers credit for Empire State Development, NYC and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey projects.

For more Information:

Phone: 631.454.0022
 samantha@ourrentalpumps.com
 www.ourrentalpumps.com



SIMCO Engineering, D.P.C.

214 W. 39th Street, Suite 905A
 New York, NY 10018

In Business Since: 1989

Principal: Amir Siddiqui, P.E.,
 President/CEO

Primary Business: Transportation Planning, Traffic Engineering, Civil Design, CM/CI Services, and Bridge Inspection.

Certifications: NYS MBE, PANYNJ DBE/MBE/SBE



Amir Siddiqui, P.E., President/CEO - SIMCO Engineering

ABOUT:

SIMCO Engineering, D.P.C., an established transportation consulting firm with an excellent reputation in traffic planning, design and engineering, and in and construction management, has been reinigorated with completely new

management along with a group of talented and experienced individuals in the industry, some of whom are also the shareholders of the company.

The new SIMCO has recently received its DBE, MBE and SBE Certifications from the PANYNJ, and has been actively participating in several transportation projects in New York State.

Last year, SIMCO joined LICA as a member and looks forward to participating in various activities and meeting the rest of the organization's members to build a strong working relationship.

For more Information:

Phone: 212.385.8100
 info@simcopc.com
 www.simcopc.com



TLC Hauling, Inc.

595 Route 25A, Suite 13
 Miller Place, NY 11764

In Business Since: 2018

Principal(s): Lauren DePetris,
 President

Primary Business: Trucking Company and Material Wholesaler.
Certifications: NYS WBE/DBE

ABOUT:

Incorporated in 2018, TLC Hauling began as a small company with big goals. Starting with only two tri-axle dump trucks, TLC has steadily grown its customer base and increased its fleet to eleven trucks, including recent model tri-axle dump trucks, dump trailers and flow-boy trailers. As a certified NYS WBE and DBE firm, TLC Hauling can help you get the job done, while helping you achieve your contract goals for M/W/DBE participation.

In 2019, TLC expanded into sitework, such as trenching, grading and drainage, working on notable projects including East Side Access, West Side Access and WildPlay Jones Beach.

Additionally, as a certified WBE/DBE material wholesaler, TLC Hauling can also supply sand, stone and other construction materials to its customers. TLC Hauling is a proud member of LICA and is signed with several local unions including Local 138, Local 282, Local 1298, Local 14, Local 15, and Local 731.

For more Information:

Phone 631.300.0556
 tlchaulinginc@gmail.com
 www.tlcnewyork.com



Lauren DePetris, President - TLC Hauling

NYS Public Service Commissioner
TRACEY EDWARDS

Just & Reasonable

Four years after her well-earned retirement from a lengthy corporate career, Tracey Edwards was thrilled to receive a nomination to serve on the Public Service Commission (PSC). Here, she believes, she can have a far greater impact than she might have had by serving in another capacity—such as Huntington Town Supervisor—a position she campaigned for, but lost, in 2018. Her subsequent appointment to the PSC in 2019 helped her see the election loss as “the best thing that ever happened” to her.

As one of seven Commissioners that comprise the New York State Public Service Commission (PSC), Tracey Edwards is a key player in an important state agency charged with several tall tasks. In addition to ‘ensuring secure and reliable access to electricity, gas, steam, telecommunications, and water utility services for New York State residents and business consumers,’ the PSC must do so ‘while protecting the natural environment’. These directives are made even more challenging as the PSC must work to achieve the state’s ambitious clean energy goals, outlined in Governor Andrew M. Cuomo’s Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA).

The Commission has another key responsibility to uphold—a commitment to ensure that rates and fees charged by utility providers are ‘just & reasonable’... a theme that seems to play a recurring role in every facet of Tracey Edward’s personal and professional life.

POSITIVE ENERGY

The safety of natural gas and liquid petroleum pipelines and the siting of major gas and electrical transmission facilities also falls under the PSC’s jurisdiction. With proposals pending for several local, high-profile energy projects (i.e. offshore wind projects off Long Beach and Montauk, among others) the Commission’s decisions will be key in determining Long Island’s role in our region’s energy future. However, as many of these proposals are now under review by the Commission, Tracey is unable to comment on them specifically. But part of the impact she hopes to have at PSC is to reshape the energy industry, making it more efficient and environmentally friendly in an effort to combat climate change which threatens our Island, our state and our planet.



Photo Credits: (Above) Tracey shares a laugh with Governor Andrew M. Cuomo. (Page 21, right) Preparing for chemo-related hair loss, Tracey’s husband, Walter, helps shave Tracey’s head before treatment. Photos courtesy of Tracey Edwards.

Ensuring that utilities are more responsive and consumer friendly (particularly in difficult times like the pandemic) is also a top priority for Tracey. When much of the world came to a halt due to COVID, Commission staff were still busy working with utility providers on rate reductions or moratoriums, helping thousands of struggling un- or under-employed New Yorkers to remain in their homes and make ends meet.

With such a significant and important scope of work, it is critical that PSC Commissioners be highly experienced, effective and energetic as well as independent and determined—qualities which Governor Cuomo clearly recognized in Tracey before nominating her to the position.

EXPERIENCED & EFFECTIVE

Few can match Tracey’s depth and breadth of knowledge when it comes to utility providers. She spent 37 years with Verizon learning the ropes from the ground up (literally) and working her way through the ranks in different departments. With each promotion came the need to learn and master a variety of technical, physical and professional challenges, right up until her retirement in 2015 as a Region President.

Tracey’s career began at 16 when she landed a summer job as a call center operator at New York Telephone (a Verizon predecessor). At the age of most sophomores, Tracey had already graduated from high school by doubling up on classes, simply because she just wanted to be “done with it.” You immediately get a sense that Tracey prefers to learn by doing and clearly found her true calling at Verizon by just ‘doing’ it and doing it well. When the summer job became a permanent opportunity, college took a back seat to Tracey’s career, although finishing her degree is one of the items remaining atop Tracey’s ‘to-do’ list.

Moving from call operator to customer service representative was an important step. Tracey credits her experience in this position for teaching her the true meaning of constituency. By speaking directly with customers, Tracey was able to learn first-hand what people really want and need.

Holidays provided the best opportunity for Tracey to interact with customers, as she covered shifts for her co-workers, allowing those who had families to spend time with them. Family is a main priority for Tracey, so she encourages and enables others to prioritize theirs as well. Despite being a self-proclaimed hard worker and tough boss, Tracey’s ‘firm but fair’ approach always permitted employees to take the time they need to tend to family matters.

Rising through the ranks, Tracey also tackled field operations and then the IT department where she became a computer programmer and worked on projects including the global, anxiety-producing Y2K conversion. Later, in 1995, she was named Verizon’s Vice President of Staffing and Diversity, responsible for human resource policies and compliance across the entire U.S. This role gave Tracey one of her first opportunities to fight for a level playing field to help others.

After noticing how few women were being hired for Verizon field positions (which paid better than most office positions), Tracey took the issue to senior management and was given the opportunity to make real change. She helped revise recruiting strategies to attract more women and increased the numbers of women working in the field. Tracey knew from experience that women could handle the more challenging and better paying jobs as well.

A HELPING HAND

Despite the historical obstacles of being a woman, particularly a woman of color, Tracey was fortunate to have earned the advice, support and respect of several advocates and mentors along the way. There was her former boss Tom Calabrese who, early on, advised Tracey to “carry yourself for the position you want” instead of the one you currently have, knowing one day she would surely achieve greater heights. Or, Virginia Ruesterholz who recommended Tracey for a Director’s position (which she achieved) based on her experience and work ethic, despite not having a college degree which was normally required.

Notably, when Tracey was promoted to Region President, top executives set the tone by advising her that she would rise or fall strictly by her results, making it clear that no personal, professional or political motives would be tolerated or permitted to interfere with Tracey’s chances of success (or failure). Time and again, when given the opportunity, Tracey’s experience, ambition and ability proved that she was the right choice and the most qualified candidate. Whether for herself or others, a level playing field and equal opportunity is all she’s ever really asked for.

As Region President, Tracey was responsible for voice, broadband and video field operations across Long Island, Westchester and upstate New York, leading a team of more than 4,000 Verizon employees whom she viewed as extended family. She was thankful for how Verizon also cared for their employees, particularly during extraordinary times.

During a field visit in the aftermath of Super Storm Sandy, as Tracey and thousands of Verizon employees worked around the clock to support customers and restore service, Tracey and her team informed the Chairman that hundreds of their own employees were in dire need of assistance. Many had lost their own homes or were displaced from their apartments, having no place to sleep, eat or shower. Cars and other personal belongings were destroyed making it difficult to get to work and find clean clothes. Worse yet, some were grieving the death of family members, while they all grieved two co-workers who died while on the job. Thankfully, those concerns did not fall on deaf ears. Verizon responded immediately, establishing employee assistance funds, offering hotels to those who were displaced and providing a host of other program and necessities to employees who were affected.

PERSONAL & PROFESSIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Before retiring, Tracey also served as president of Empire City Subway Company, a Verizon subsidiary specializing in subsurface engineering and construction services. Having had responsibility for building and maintaining conduit and manholes in the Bronx and Manhattan, Tracey understands the importance of proper maintenance and continual infrastructure improvement. However, it was a Stage 2 breast cancer diagnosis that forced Tracey to recognize the need to attend to her own personal infrastructure, prompting her retirement from Verizon in 2015, after 37 years on the job.

It was structural support of the emotional kind that Tracey would now have to rely upon. There was no one better than her three children, grandchildren and Walter (her husband of 42 years) with whom she “fell in love with all over again” during this difficult time. Tracey called him her ‘rock’, giving her the strength she needed to get through it. Walter had now become a fierce advocate for the woman who had always advocated for others.



After two surgeries, radiation, chemotherapy and twice-yearly infusions to stave off a recurrence of the cancer, Tracey recently hit her 5-year ‘all clear’ mark. But she takes nothing for granted. Cancer, she says, makes you really aware of time and she’s committed to getting healthier to ensure she has more of it... more time to enjoy her grandchildren and complete personal goals such as finishing that college degree. More importantly, she is determined to be on this earth long enough to achieve meaningful change for people of color and much needed reforms.

Continued on next page



SERVICE UNINTERRUPTED

Community service has been part of Tracey's DNA since childhood. Helping others was something her parents demanded/required of all three of their children. With a teacher (and liberal Democrat) for a mother and a (Republican) police officer for a father, it was something they could both agree upon. Not only was Tracey's father a member of the original Huntington police force, but he went on to become the first African-American Detective in the history of the Suffolk County Police Department. It's easy to see why Tracey now continues a legacy to "serve and protect" others.

Elwood, where Tracey has fond memories of growing up, was (and still is), a diverse but close-knit community where racism and racial inequity were not widely evident. However, that was not the case elsewhere. In her own backyard of Huntington, you need only to drive south on New York Avenue for 3.5 miles between Main Street and Jericho Turnpike in order to observe clear signs of underserved communities and economic disparity that needs focus and attention.

It's the obvious (and not-so-obvious) signs of racial injustice that drive Tracey's ongoing commitment to public service.

It's the obvious (and not-so-obvious) signs of racial injustice that drive Tracey's ongoing commitment to public service. She has served on the local school board, the town planning board, NYS Economic Development Council, and as a vocal and valuable member of the Huntington Town Council from 2012 through 2016. As Councilwoman, Tracey successfully advocated and addressed many of the critical needs and concerns of her constituents, particularly minority members of the community.

REBEL WITH A CAUSE

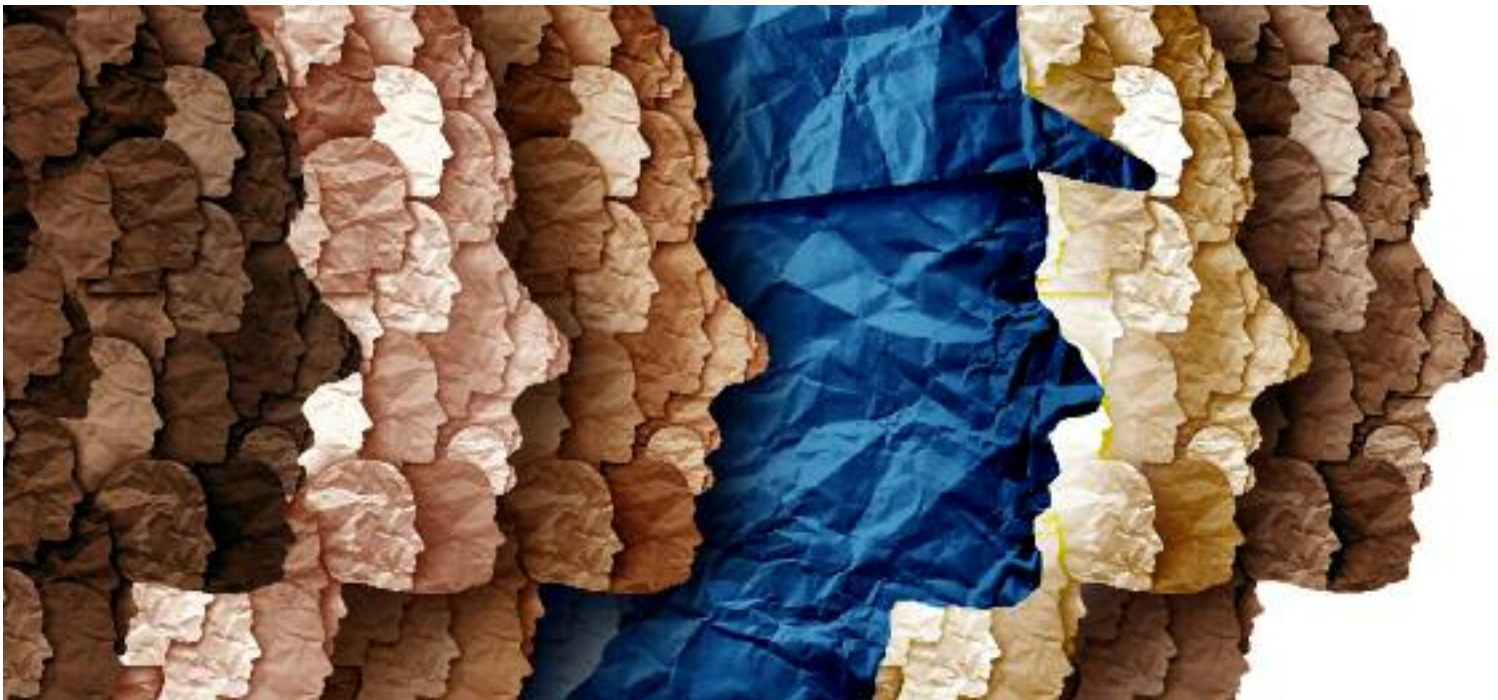
One of Tracey's greatest achievements on the Council was spearheading the creation of the Huntington Opportunity Resource Center (HORC). The HORC was developed, in partnership with Suffolk County, to help unemployed and underemployed residents with services such as job preparation and training and to provide opportunities for education, employment and growth. Tracey worked with labor leaders like John Durso to establish partnerships with local unions to promote their pre-apprentice programs to the minority community and assist with job placement.

Over the years, Tracey has worked to help to many other worthy causes as well, including Habitat for Humanity of Suffolk, the United Way of Long Island and the Melville Lion's Club. And in 2019, she finally opened her own consulting company to focus on diversity, branding and economic development. But for more than 20 years Tracey has been an active member of the NAACP, serving the last 15 years as Long Island's Regional Director.

"CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW?!"

This popular commercial punchline was formulated for Verizon but it fits Tracey just as well. However, it's her values, rather than her volume, that gets your attention. Behind that smile is a brilliant combination of knowledge, experience, confidence and determination. Tracey is fierce but fair, respectful but relentless. And she's got a healthy ability to hit the "reset" button whenever necessary. Above all, she is 'no BS', which has earned her the respect of everyone at the table, including those whose position may differ from her own.

Tracey's ability to stand her ground without being perceived as implacable is critically important when you're fighting for change on issues such as police reform. Recently, as part of a Suffolk County task force put together by County Executive Steve Bellone, Tracey worked on the task force with police unions, civic groups and other key leaders. She was pleased at the progress made on some issues including changes to how police respond to mental health calls and traffic stops but made it clear there is more work that must be done.



A LONG TOUGH ROAD AHEAD

Law enforcement isn't the only institution that needs reform. To suggest otherwise, especially to Tracey Edwards, would be dismissive and frankly, dishonest. For real progress to be made at the societal level, every organization, agency and industry must take a long hard look at historical biases (intentional or not) and current business practices, then take meaningful action to affect change. Tracey knows that change will not come easily but insists it must happen because "everybody's got to eat" and she's taking us all to task to do our part.

As a whole, the transportation infrastructure industry fully supports efforts to provide more work opportunities for minorities, women, veterans and disadvantaged businesses. In addition, general contractors (GC's) on public works projects are normally required to utilize MWBE subcontractors in order to meet specific participation goals (usually ranging from 10-30%). However, Tracey insists we need to do more and she isn't afraid to "call BS" (literally) when she hears an argument that doesn't ring true in her book. (It's important to note that her rebuttal is somehow delivered in a way that's neither rude nor threatening... it simply makes you stop and think. It tests your true understanding of the issue and makes sure you wholeheartedly believe in whatever position you're peddling. It's both startling and refreshing at the same time).

New York State's MWBE program is a primary point of contention with our industry. GC's insist they often have difficulty achieving the mandated goals due to a lack of qualified MWBE subcontractors. Whether that void is due to an insufficient number of MWBE firms to service the industry or because the pool of certified MWBEs doesn't contain enough vendors who can handle the specialized nature or volume of work needed, is another matter. Tracey questions the validity of that argument, as well as the claim that such a void even exists. She believes it's far too easy for contractors to obtain waivers showing they've made 'good faith efforts' to meet the goals which lets them off the hook. True or not, this is one of the reasons the current MWBE system isn't working and in Tracey's opinion, needs to be completely redesigned. In addition, the ways developers are allowed to fulfill the requirements of FTE (Full Time Equivalents) on jobs, using temporary workers here-and-there versus actual full time employment, is disingenuous and needs to be fixed.

However, Tracey insists we need to do more and she isn't afraid to "call BS" (literally) when she hears an argument that doesn't ring true in her book.

Another challenge for our industry lies in the fact that many contracting firms are non-minority, multi-generational family-owned businesses which will be passed down to the next-of-kin. It will take years to recruit, train, mentor and promote minorities into positions of leadership, to a point where they might eventually branch out and start their own business. Tracey says this fact should make us even more committed to doing so and accelerating the process.

Tracey admits there are issues that must be addressed so that the process works. GC's often see the mandates of working with vendors with whom they may have no prior relationship or experience (and when you're playing with projects in the \$1 to \$100 million + space) as a big risk. Alternatively, MWBEs often feel as though they still have to beg for work, for pieces of a project rather than winning the job as a certified business owner and their firm's reputation or ability. Tracey believes MWBE's want the opportunity to win work based on their own merits. But, there's the rub. Until we give more work to MWBE's and build those trusted relationships, it will never be an equitable and level playing field.



Until we give more work to MWBE's and build those trusted relationships, it will never be an equitable and level playing field.

Continued on page 25

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FRUIT SALAD FOR ALL

Tracey says the focus now needs to be about inclusion and equity, not diversity and equality. There is a distinct and important difference which was described perfectly in a TEDx Talk given by a woman named Kenyona Matthews, which Tracey brought to my attention. In it, Matthews describes diversity as a fruit platter. You have apples, oranges, grapes, pears, bananas and kiwis all together on a plate. "Congratulations...you have achieved diversity!" However, the fruit platter still allows people to pick and choose the fruit they prefer. They are all separate. Their relationship is superficial. The fruits are not involved in any meaningful way with one another. But once you cut up the fruit into equal pieces and put it together in a bowl to create fruit salad, you have real inclusion and equity. All the pieces are the same. They co-exist and interact. No single piece of fruit carries greater weight than another. They come together as a group to form something new and better. That, my friends, is inclusion.

All Tracey asks is to leave the lip service behind and do the right thing...

In a better, more perfect world, there would be no mandates. Participation goals would be unnecessary if each of us would simply choose to be more equitable for the greater good of everyone. We each have the ability and the power to do so. However, Tracey is not so sure we will ever achieve that perfect world.

All Tracey asks is to leave the lip service behind and do the right thing: Don't bring in a diversity consultant to review your organization's hiring practices, instead "hire a damn minority to actually serve on your board of directors." Or, promote a qualified minority to a senior management position. Then proactively recruit and engage with more minorities whenever possible. Make a concerted effort. And be sure to bring some fruit salad to share.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Tracey is anxious to continue her important work on the PSC but soon, she will hand over the reins of her role at the NAACP to someone from the younger generation. However, she is not going away.

As a cancer survivor, Tracey has a renewed focus, energy and an unbreakable desire to be a driving force for change. At such a pivotal time in history with heightened awareness, increased activism and social outcry over racial injustice, she plans to seize the moment. She is hopeful about the outcome, but will leave nothing to chance. She is determined to leave her grandchildren a world which is better, brighter and more equitable for everyone. A world where everything is simply... *just & reasonable.*

###

Loud & Clear

with Tracey Edwards

Q&A

TRACEY A. EDWARDS

Q. What was your most challenging position at Verizon?

A. **Probably my first, as a call operator.**

Q. What is your greatest professional accomplishment?

A. **I'm quite proud of my entire 37-year career with Verizon and achieving the position of Region President before I retired.**

Q. What's your biggest beef with your husband?

A. **He's always looked younger than me, ever since the day we met!**

Q. What is your greatest personal achievement?

A. **I am most proud of my family: my husband (of 42 years), my three children and their families.**

Q. What the best advice you ever received?

A. **To stay true to yourself... know what your personal "brand" is. And, don't cast people aside.**

Q. What advice would you give to young minorities today?

A. **Don't get discouraged. And trust your instincts. They're so much smarter than we were at their age. Change is hard but they need that energy and perseverance to keep going.**

Q. How do you deal with anger, especially about issues of racism and social injustice?

A. **I believe in hitting the 'reset' button – to let the anger go and get past it so I can move on and continue to work toward trying to make things better.**

Q. What is the most critical climate-related issue we need to address?

A. **We must reduce emissions and train a workforce prepared for clean energy jobs.**

Q. What's the most critical economic issue?

A. **Recovering from COVID. A lot of people are still way behind where they need to be at this point.**

Q. Do you have a favorite saying or motto?

A. **"It is what it is."**

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Metallic Lathers and Reinforcing Iron Workers

Local 46

The Metallic Lathers and Reinforcing Iron Workers Local 46 is headquartered in New York City, however, our members are known throughout Long Island. Our jurisdiction covers a large swath of downstate New York including both Nassau and Suffolk counties, Westchester, all five NYC boroughs, and the southern section of Rockland County.

As part of the International Union of Wood, Wire and Metal Lathers and the International Association of Bridge, Structural, Ornamental and Reinforcing Ironworkers, Local 46 has authority over all segments of reinforced steel, post tension, wire lath, black iron, and suspended ceilings (to name a few examples). We also work on many heavy/highway projects, airports and commercial/residential buildings.

Local 46 offers direct entry programs which are dedicated to preparing a trained and skilled workforce from communities throughout the five boroughs for careers in the unionized construction industry. Unionized apprenticeship offers training, education, certification, high wages, health benefits, and retirement security paid for by union contractors, while simultaneously being employed on construction projects.

Our union seeks to promote the material and intellectual welfare of our members and their families while securing adequate wages, working conditions and opportunity of employment. The reputation of Local 46 is one of being a leader in benefits and conditions for our working brothers and sisters, and their families.

We encourage our members to register and vote in the interest of obtaining higher standards of citizenship and secure adequate legislation that will safeguard and promote the principles of free collective bargaining. And, as one of the oldest and proudest labor unions in New York, we have a rich history of tradition and experience.

The officers and members of Local 46 take great pride in providing employers with a highly skilled, well trained and drug-free workforce.

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Is Bellone Suffering the Southwest Sewer District Curse?

by Desmond Ryan, Government Relations Consultant

The Boston Red Sox sold Babe Ruth to the New York Yankees in 1920 resulting in the “Curse of the Bambino.” The poor BoSox would go on to an insufferable 86-year championship drought before the curse was finally broken. In Suffolk County, there seems to be a similar curse cast upon the locals. Can it be broken?

That curse is the Southwest Sewer District and it seems to be hovering directly over a lifelong politician who grew up in the epicenter of the plagued sewer program. As a kid, Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone played in the neighborhood streets among the open trenches and concrete sewer pipes strewn along the roadways awaiting installation.

During the 1970s, with the availability of 85% federal funding for sewer main lines from the Clean Water Act, Suffolk County was optimistically planning to install a countywide sewer system. Instead, today, nearly 75% of the county remains unsewered. That equates to nearly 360,000 residences which remain unconnected. The blame is often placed on the cost overruns, mismanagement and corruption that took place with the sewer program located in the county’s southwestern region. The project’s original cost estimate of \$291 million ballooned to a price tag above \$1 billion. That led to the voters’ removal of then County Executive John Klein*, thanks to a successful “Flush Klein in ‘79” campaign. The toxic Southwest Sewer District curse stymied any future sewer expansion in the county thereafter.

A decade ago, in the fall of 2011, Bellone was in the midst of his first campaign to become Suffolk County Executive. Touting himself as a visionary environmentalist, he championed how he would break the curse and finally deliver needed wastewater infrastructure to other parts of the county. As term limits now have him sunsetting towards his final time in office, not one inch of sewer pipe has been added to any commercial or residential community. The curse continues.

During Bellone’s first year as County Executive, 2012, Long Island was ravaged by Super Storm Sandy. Boatloads of federal and state emergency money suddenly became available for needed recovery efforts. The County Executive seized the opportunity to direct available grant dollars for his sewer expansion programs under the guise of “resiliency efforts.” Nine years later, however, those funds have not helped put a single shovel in the ground, let alone flush any additional toilets. Many advocates fear these grant opportunities will expire and again, the curse will continue.

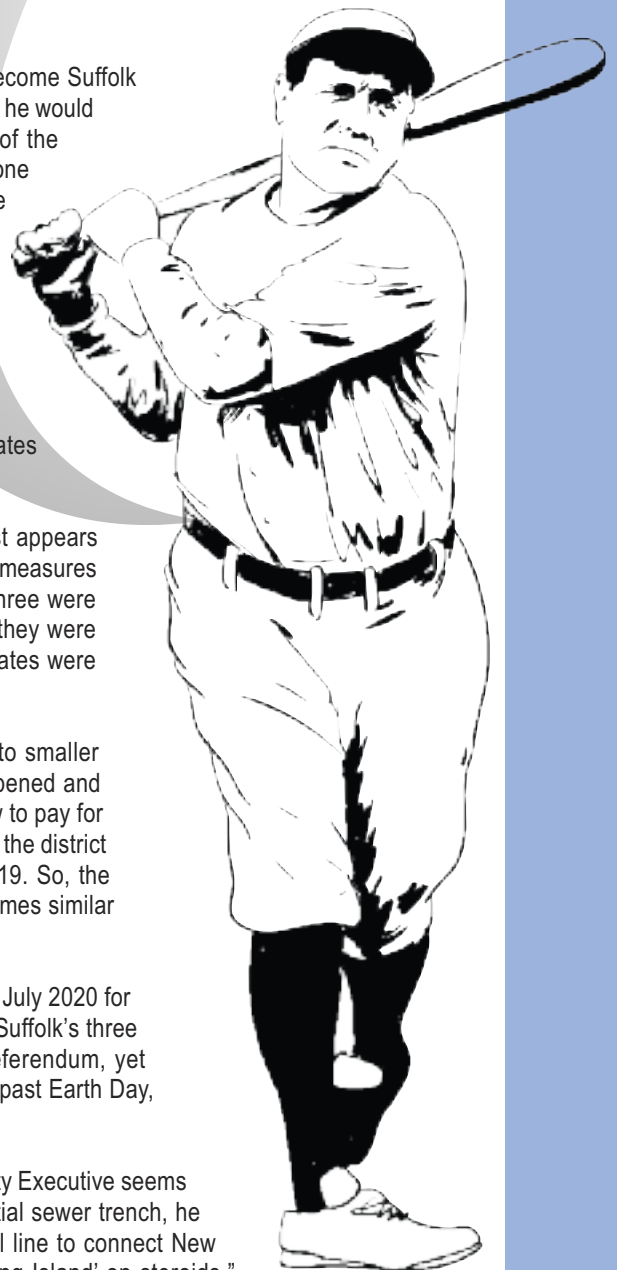
This does not mean there have not been efforts to move the program forward. It just appears Bellone is truly cursed. Three years ago, his administration put up three separate ballot measures for voters to approve sewers in parts of Babylon, Brookhaven and Islip. Two of the three were approved (Islip failed), and along with another program in the Village of Patchogue, they were advanced for design. However, dismissing industry warnings that the initial bid estimates were unrealistic, the county opened bids in the spring of 2020 revealing that prediction.

Cursing the results, county officials rejected the bids and broke up the contracts into smaller ones, seeking new bids during the winter of 2020/21. Those bids have since been opened and low bid contractors have been notified, yet the county still can’t seem to figure out how to pay for the projects. Additionally, the county hasn’t yet asked the state comptroller to authorize the district expansions necessary for the areas voters approved at the polls on January 22, 2019. So, the projects remain stalled (cursed?). Contractors now listen to the nostalgic, hopeful themes similar to those of long-suffering Red Sox fans, “wait ‘til next year.”

In contrast to Suffolk’s sewer curse, neighboring Nassau held its first public meeting in July 2020 for the Bay Park Conveyance Project, a \$439 million sewer project (valued at more than Suffolk’s three projects combined). That meeting took place a year and a half after the Suffolk referendum, yet Governor Andrew Cuomo was able to host Bay Park’s groundbreaking ceremony this past Earth Day, April 21, 2021.

Meanwhile, Bellone’s sewers remain a pipe dream and the self-defined visionary County Executive seems to be moving onto bigger projects. While he hasn’t successfully dug a single residential sewer trench, he is now touting a \$105 billion tunnel beneath Long Island Sound for a high-speed rail line to connect New York City to Boston. Bellone claims, “The North Atlantic Rail project is ‘Connect Long Island’ on steroids.” Incidentally, the “Connect Long Island” project was supposed to criss-cross Suffolk with bus rapid transit systems. That program has seen as much progress as his cursed sewer program. Let’s hope he can finally break the spell.

*The author served in the County Executive’s office as an assistant to John Klein.



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Calling for a Comprehensive Approach to Safety

by Assemblywoman Michaëlle C. Solages

The Southern State Parkway is a 25-mile limited access roadway that begins at an interchange with the Belt and Cross Island parkways in Elmont, in Nassau County, and travels east to an interchange with the Sagtikos State Parkway in West Islip, Suffolk County. Master builder Robert Moses designed the Southern State Parkway in the 1920s as a getaway for city residents who wanted to visit Long Island's parks. Now the Southern State Parkway is a heavily trafficked thoroughfare used daily by commuters.

As reported in the State Department of Transportation's Parkway Signage and Ramp Configuration study on wrong-way driving, the Southern State is now one of Long Island's busiest roads, accommodating upwards of 200,000 vehicles per day traveling at speeds exceeding 65 miles per hour. While both the state and federal governments have invested in infrastructure improvements in recent years, collisions and accidents are far too common. Many of the studies and police reports indicate that these crashes and fatalities are related to driver behavior.

That is why I have introduced Assembly Bill A6959, which would designate the Southern State Parkway as a "Highway Safety Corridor." This bill would allow for

increased enforcement and fines to apply when driving in that zone. A combination of educational signage, increased enforcement, traffic enforcement technology, and increased penalties would help to curb dangerous driving on the roadway. This new proposal is consistent with safety corridor legislation passed in other states, like Pennsylvania and Arizona. Those zones have seen significant reductions in speed as well as accidents. The enactment of New York's first 'Highway Safety Corridor' along the Southern state parkway would be a comprehensive approach to safety.



We must remain proactive in addressing the preventable vehicular crashes that keep occurring on the parkway and utilize all the tools available. I will continue to work closely with my colleagues in the region to pass similar traffic safety legislation similar to our previously passed measures requiring commercial GPS devices for charter buses, or evaluating the configuration of entrance and exit ramps, and signage at entranceways and exits on the Southern State Parkway. A comprehensive traffic safety approach that invests in New York's infrastructure will make our roads safer for all who use them.

Michaëlle C. Solages is a member of the New York State Assembly, representing the 22nd Assembly District. She serves as the Deputy Majority Leader in the Assembly and Chair of the Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic & Asian Legislative Caucus.





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