

LONG ISLAND

FALL 2020

ROAD WARRIORS

A publication of the Long Island Contractors' Association

Roads, Rails & Traffic Tales

Read how Lauren Scala made
it from the L.I.E. to NBC

Lauren Scala

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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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TRAFFIC CONGESTION: The Human Factor

Long Islanders know a thing or two about traffic.

Recently, TRIP, a national transportation research nonprofit, completed an analysis on behalf of the Long Island Contractors' Association, Inc. (LICA). Its findings reveal the annual amount of time Long Islander's spend stuck in traffic, is 81 hours. In addition to obvious frustration, the delay also costs each motorist \$1,684 a year in wasted time and fuel.

One would assume the main reason for our region's congestion is the number of cars on our roadways. Nassau and Suffolk are the only counties in New York State with more than 1 million registered vehicles each, totaling 2.3 million combined. Together, these cars share 11,610 center-lane miles of roadways in the Nassau-Suffolk region. Though the large number of cars does contribute to congestion, it is not the only factor.

Many of our roads and highways were designed and built in another era, with different use expectations in mind. Our beautiful parkways were constructed nearly a century ago, primarily for leisurely drives in a Ford Model T. They did not envision, nor take into account, today's volume of vehicles or speed capabilities, adding to our traffic troubles.

Arguably, the greatest contributor to congestion is our own human behavior. How drivers act and behave behind the steering wheel has a significant impact on traffic.

Excessive speed and aggressive driving account for many of the high number of accidents along the Southern State Parkway, infamously dubbed "Blood Alley." Our insatiable curiosity gets the best of us as we "rubberneck" to catch a glimpse of someone else's roadside woes. Texting and talking while driving definitely adds to delays and raises safety concerns. But there are several less obvious human behaviors which transportation system planners take into consideration when reconstructing or building new roadways.

Traffic engineers recognize that a posted speed limit sign has minimal effect in setting the actual speed of traffic. The surrounding environment has more of an impact. The curvature of a road and width of the travel lane will indictate to the driver how best to navigate the vehicle.

Studies show that a motorist, traveling along a standard 12-foot wide highway lane along an open shoulder area, is highly likely to reduce speed when the road crosses a bridge, regardless of the fact that the lane has not changed in width. These "human reactions" are so commonplace that the federal Highway Capacity Manual, used by highway designers, addresses these anticipated emotional driver responses.

One example is a phenomenon observed shortly after the Long Island Expressway was extended eastward through Queens, where it met the interchange with the Cross Island Parkway (CIP), in a slight valley near Alley Pond Park. The laws of physics tell us that speeds will increase on a decline, yet traffic engineers discovered that vehicles on the L.I.E. decreased speeds as they approached the CIP, causing traffic to back up. Traffic monitors discovered that, despite a highway design which provided safe travel at the existing speed limit, drivers instinctively braked on the decline to resist the perception of fast-falling down the hill. The brake light effect caused a chain reaction contributing to the congestion at this now-infamous chokepoint.

The heavy construction and highway industry is committed to helping eliminate as much traffic congestion as possible (Oakdale Merge for starters), through improved capacity and safety enhancements. Yet, human behavior remains a challenging issue for most motorists and professionals in our field.

As long as there is traffic congestion, we'll need help navigating it. In this issue of Long Island Road Warriors, we highlight a professional who has mastered the art of calm and reassurance, providing valuable information to reduce our frustration and guide our daily drives. Long Island native Lauren Scala, WNBC-TV's traffic anchor for *Today in New York* is someone who many of us rely upon to get through one of the most difficult challenges we face—the morning commute.

We hope this human interest story, of how one Long Island native made it from the L.I.E. to NBC, is one you will find to be a pleasant distraction (as long as you're not driving)!

Sincerely,



Marc Herbst
Executive Director
Long Island
Contractors'
Association



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IF YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE PAYING - HOW MUCH IS IT COSTING YOU?

by Peter Brickman, President, NCCP Group

National Credit Card Processing Group (NCCP Group)—one of LICA's newest members—is a nationally recognized credit card processing company founded and headquartered on Long Island. Focused on the heavy highway construction and infrastructure industries, NCCP is committed to finding substantial savings for their clients. With a special understanding of asphalt supply & paving companies, concrete ready mix producers, aggregate recyclers and more, NCCP is the “go-to” vendor for our industry.



With major credit card brands offering lucrative rewards programs and cash-back incentives, more companies are choosing to pay by credit card, in turn, leading more vendors to accept credit card payments. While the benefits of credit card acceptance are many, related processing fees can add up quickly, costing a business more than they realize. That's where NCCP Group comes in.

“While it's in the best interest of most credit card processors and banks to keep CFOs and owners in the dark about the details of credit card processing fees, NCCP Group operates differently” says NCCP Group President, Peter Brickman. At NCCP Group, we take the time to educate customers, so they fully understand all the costs associated with accepting credit card payments, while learning how to maximize available savings. They'll be no more conversations of “*I didn't realize I was paying that*” or “*what is that fee for?*” NCCP Group believes transparency, honesty and fair pricing are key to a successful relationship, especially in a business-to-business (B2B) environment.

B2B Interchange Optimizer (a-k-a How We Help You Save Money - and Reduce Liability)

The heavy construction industry is predominately comprised of B2B type businesses, which operate in a B2B “Card Not Present” environment. In this environment, purchasing and corporate card payments are eligible for significant savings when a company processes the payment with “enhanced Level 2 and Level 3 data”. Simply put, if you can provide copious amounts of information about the customer making the charge, the transaction carries a lower risk for the credit card company, resulting in lower transaction rates, saving you money. In the same vein, B2B type transactions that are processed with minimal customer information, present an increased risk, resulting in higher rates which are built into the backend of the transaction, costing you more. At NCCP Group, our B2B Interchange Optimizer helps ensure your company qualifies to receive the best/lowest rates possible, potentially saving you thousands (or tens of thousands) of dollars each year.

Our B2B platform also helps lower company liability, by providing a safe, secure, and fully encrypted payment gateway on which to store and process your customer's confidential information. No more paper forms or file draws full of credit card numbers that can be compromised or stolen.

Do the Math - See the Savings

Paving Contractor A pays his \$45,000 invoice using his corporate credit card, which is processed without B2B rates. As the vendor, would typically pay 2.79% of that transaction (\$1,255.50) in fees. If that same transaction qualified under NCCP Group's B2B rates, your company would instead pay a 2.10% fee (\$945), saving you more than \$300 (\$310.50 to be exact) on that transaction alone, simply by running your customer's card on the proper B2B platform.

Peter Brickman, Founder and President of National Credit Card Processing Group says “*With our unique understanding of the heavy construction industry and related business operations, NCCP Group not only helps these types of companies save money, but we make the entire process of setting up or switching to a new credit card processing vendor both simple and painless.*”

Peter notes that companies which operate primarily in a “Card Present” environment still need to have the proper credit card terminal with B2B technology incorporated. “*This was a game changer, even for our clients in scale houses and dispatch facilities.*”

In these times, it's more important than ever for businesses to save money wherever possible. Peter suggests starting with a call to NCCP Group for a free review of your company's current credit card processing history. Together, he will review one of your monthly merchant statements and go over your current rates and fees. “*One simple phone call could help you keep more of the money you earn.*” Visit www.nccpgroup.com for more information or contact Peter directly at: 516-353-9177.

Keeping Long Island Mobile (Pre- and Post-Pandemic)

The Long Island Contractors' Association recently released a report by TRIP (A National Transportation Research Project) entitled "Keeping Long Island Mobile: Accomplishments and Challenges in Improving Accessibility on Long Island to Support Quality of Life and a Strong Economy." In short, it examines issues such as traffic congestion and the critical role transportation infrastructure plays in helping maintain Long Island's quality of life as well as our economic competitiveness. The latter being more important than ever these days.

Although much of the report was compiled before the pandemic-related shutdown, the data it references (the most recent available, largely from 2017) and the issues it examines, will remain relevant once the pandemic is over.

Traffic congestion is a problem certain to continue, even in the very near term, as the region and businesses begin to re-open, students return to school (whether full or part-time) and some parents return to work.

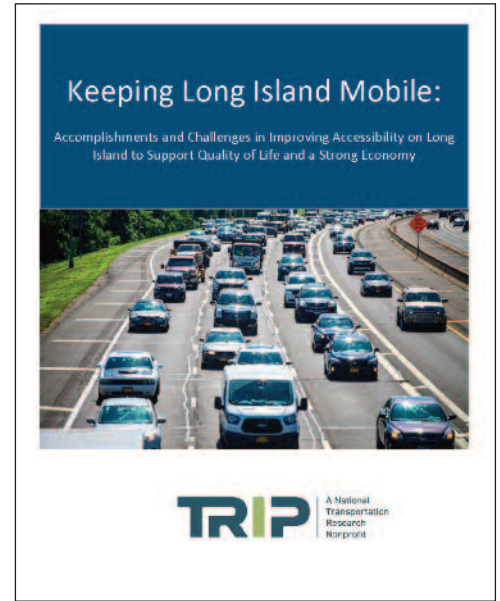
In order to keep our supply chains rolling, emergency and essential personnel working, and the general public moving, we must ensure that our infrastructure is safe, strong and sufficient.

For Long Island, it is likely to get worse before it gets better, with an increased influx of "guest residents" arriving from New York City and more workers choosing their car over mass transit. Commuters who previously trekked into NYC or other areas, but are able to work remotely, will now be home 24/7, driving locally, adding to the volume at local community "hot spots" for traffic.

The increased frequency and intensity of severe weather events in our area only underscores the need to review capacity concerns which can affect evacuation and/or emergency response accessibility.

If the coronavirus pandemic has taught us nothing else, it has certainly illustrated the importance of being prepared. To keep our supply chains rolling, emergency and essential personnel working, and the general public moving, we must ensure that our infrastructure is safe, strong and sufficient. Our transportation network must be resilient, reliable and ready to handle whatever Man—or Mother Nature—may throw at us.

To read a copy of the full report, visit: www.licanys.org/TRIPreport





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Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS): A Tool to Combat Congestion

by Emilio Sosa, P.E., Director of Advanced Transportation Systems, GPI



Overhead signs inform motorists of conditions ahead

Over the decades as the number of automobiles rose and the distances motorists traveled increased, roadway networks were expanded to meet the needs of the suburbanization of the areas outside of cities. Unfortunately, it did not take long for the road networks to become congested once again. After several cycles of expansion and subsequent congestion, combined with diminishing available space, there was a realization by transportation officials that “*you can’t build your way out of congestion.*” It is with that realization that the initial concepts of traffic management were developed, which attempted to improve the reliability and maximize the throughput/efficiency of roadway networks. This eventually led to establishment of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS).

ITS applies advanced and ever-evolving technologies of communications, computer systems, monitoring, sensing, and control to improve the safety, efficiency, reliability, and recovery of the transportation network and has progressed to networks beyond roadways. Long Island has benefited from ITS for nearly 35 years with the deployment of the NYSDOT INFORM system.

The system initially began as a Federal Highway Administration demonstration project and encompassed Long Island’s central corridor stretching 45 miles from the I495 Long Island Expressway (LIE)/Grand Central Parkway interchange to Hauppauge and consisted of the Island’s major east-west highways and its busiest north-south connecting routes. Initially the system was thought of as a toy for the traffic engineers to play with. But since that time, the system has proven its usefulness and evolved into an integral part of regional operations and has almost tripled the area it covers.



Cameras identify emergencies; help is deployed

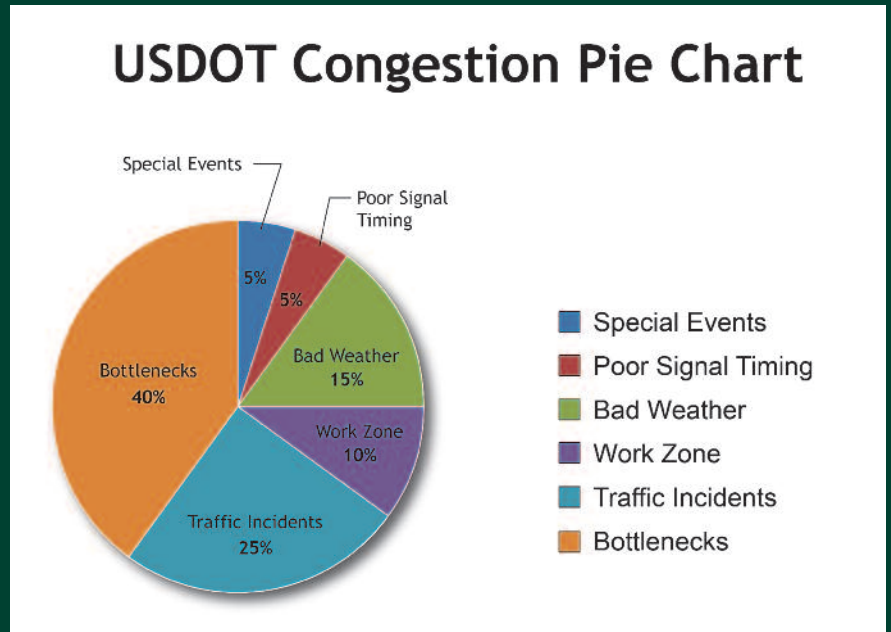
From the INFORM Transportation Management Center, the various roadways are monitored through various systems, 24 hours a day/7 days a week. This is done in order to detect any event that impacts the network and then take action to minimize their impacts on traffic flow.

Congestion is classified into two broad categories:

Recurring Congestion: This is congestion that consistently and routinely develops at a certain point or along a section of the transportation network. This type of congestion is usually caused by the demand for the facility exceeding its capacity.

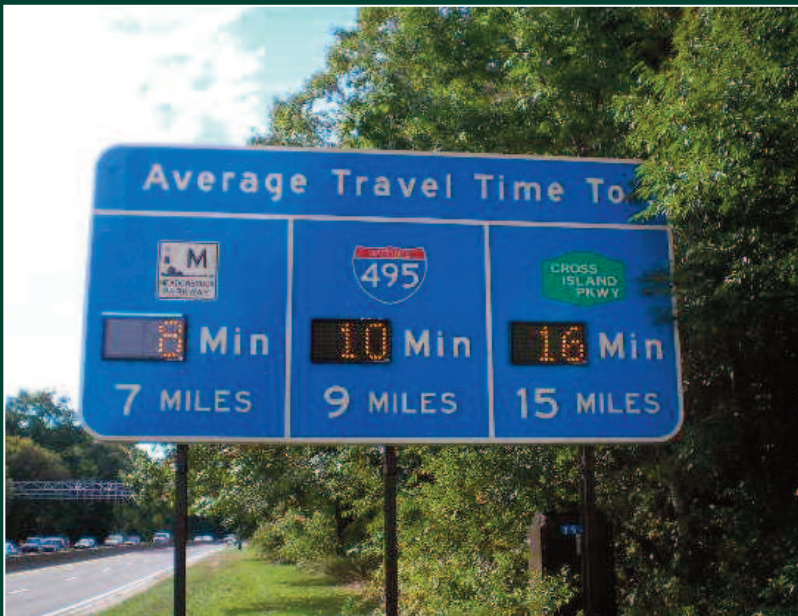
Non-Recurring Congestion: This is congestion that in general develops randomly due to specific events such as crashes, disabled vehicles, work zones, adverse weather conditions, planned special events, etc.

Nationally it is accepted that recurring congestion (bottlenecks) cause approximately 40% of the delays on the transportation network while non-recurring congestion causes the remaining 60% of the delays on the network. A more finite distribution of the causes of congestion is depicted in the chart from USDOT.



The implementation of ITS strategies and technologies can address the various types of congestion. The use of ramp meters can help extend the time a congested roadway can continue to operate efficiently by breaking up merging traffic into individual vehicles that can be more readily accommodated by the roadway. Variable message signs are used to provide information to motorists to help balance or reduce vehicular traffic by warning them of congestion ahead or direct them to better flowing routes. Pre-determined special timing plans can be implemented to address changes in demand. Real-time control options are based on the data collected from the various ITS sensors and the CCTV's deployed to monitor the transportation network.

Studies have shown that on a road like the LIE, an event on the shoulder reduces capacity by 19% while an event that blocks a single lane reduces capacity by 42%. If a lane blockage were to happen during a peak period it would create 4 to 5 minutes of delay for every minute the lane is closed. So being able to detect and respond to an event can have a significant impact on congestion. If you save just 15 minutes in the timeline of just one event you would save 60 to 75 minutes of delay. When you consider all the events that happen on Long Island, you then realize how much ITS can positively impact our travel.



Travel time panels offer other route options

Throughout the years the technology has changed, improved, and expanded, but the mission has remained the same—to improve the safety, efficiency, and reliability of our transportation network.

Emilio Sosa, P.E.
 Director of Advanced Transportation Systems
 GPI





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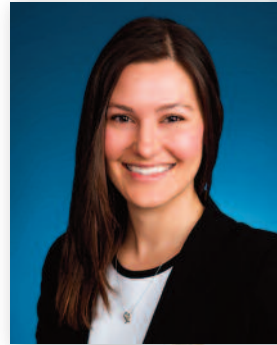
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Hinck Electric: EXPERIENCED & INFORMATIVE

We all know first-hand about Long Island traffic, but not much is typically known about the NYSDOT's system which works to alleviate that traffic congestion. New York State's Intelligent Transportation System (ITS), commonly referred to as the "INFORM" System, consists of a computerized traffic management system which incorporates freeway surveillance on all major East/West and North/South highways and parkways on Long Island, using vehicle detectors, message board signs, ramp metering control, CCTV and numerous other traffic control and communication equipment, all to help minimize and reduce traffic congestion on Long Island.



Hinck Electric, a proud LICA member, is a 50+ year old, second generation company which has been the INFORM maintenance contractor for the NYSDOT since 2014. In addition to maintaining the ITS system, Hinck also maintains traffic signals for numerous towns and other municipalities in Nassau and Suffolk. They are regularly contracted to build new traffic signals and other ITS projects across the Island as well.

Although most people recognize Hinck Electric because of their high visibility traffic work, local municipalities and general contractors know that Hinck also excels in numerous other types of electrical work. Hinck's extensive experience includes everything from LIRR design build work to Bascular span drawbridges, water district and sewage pump stations, airport runway work, highway lighting, sports lighting, medium voltage substations, solar power installations and red light cameras, to name just a few.

As a company, Hinck Electric takes great pride in every project they do—striving to provide customers with the best possible electrical work, while ensuring they are completely satisfied with the entire working relationship. Whether the customer is a municipality or general contractor, they want to leave them feeling that Hinck Electric is the only electrical contractor they'll ever want to use...



DEAD VOTERS SOCIETY

by Government Relations Consultant, Desmond M. Ryan

“A vote is like a rifle: its usefulness depends upon the character of the user.”

— Theodore Roosevelt

In the past, politicians and political organizations such as James Michael Curley of Boston, Mayor Richard Daley of Chicago, the Pendergasts of St. Louis and the finest machine of all—Boss Tweed and the Sachems of Tammany in New York City—were notorious for repeat voters, stuffing the ballot box and turning out the “cemetery vote.” Very little has changed. Recent voter turnout in Georgia was found to be inaccurate as it showed more than 1,000 people voted twice.

Governor Andrew Cuomo now finds himself embedded in the crosshairs of a national controversy: absentee ballots. In New York, primary night on June 23, turned into a mail-in catastrophe. President Trump specifically cited the 12th congressional district, where it took weeks to decide the victor. Election officials struggled to find, evaluate and effectively count the over 65,000 mail in ballots that were cast. The governor and the state are now expecting that there will be a greater push for early voting which will allow voters the opportunity to cast their ballot at certain polling stations between October 24 and November 1. New York will be accepting ballots by mail, as long as they are post-marked by November 3.

President Trump has made it clear that he doesn’t “have a problem with anyone voting by mail.” His objections to universal vote-by-mail comes from the fact that ballots are mailed to all registered voters in a state. Nationally, election officials are anticipating a tsunami of mailed ballots in November’s hotly contested presidential election.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been the driving factor behind the attempts to keep people away from polling stations, thus creating the unsolicited ballots, which could be sent to people who may be deceased or no longer living at registered addresses. The president believes that flooding the electoral process with these ballots creates a recipe for voter fraud.

Contrary to popular belief, democracy is *not* a spectator sport.

Recent published reports suggest that, depending on the number of mail-in ballots received, the final count could not be expected until well into 2021—past inauguration day. Are we potentially looking at another “hanging chads” situation of 2000?

The very foundation of this nation’s democratic process is the ability for every citizen to effectively participate and cast their vote as they see fit each election day. Protecting the integrity of the electoral system is paramount to preserving our way of life. Citizens must cut through the media noise and fake news and realize, whether they vote in person or by mail, they must participate in the process. Contrary to popular belief, democracy is *not* a spectator sport.

As Curley always said, vote early and often.



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Senator Monica R. Martinez

Fighting for Long Island's Infrastructure

Earlier this year, I spoke at a press conference alongside LICA to emphasize the importance of finding a solution to the Oakdale Merge and for the State Department of Transportation (DOT) to take action. It has been estimated that approximately 126,000 vehicles travel through the Oakdale Merge per day, giving way to serious safety hazard conditions. It is the site of numerous accidents and accounts for hours of traffic for thousands of Long Islanders each and every day. It has truly become the bane of the commute for so many Long Island residents.



In the 2017-18 budget, the State pledged \$20 million for bridge and road construction related to the Oakdale Merge. As the representative of this area and a member of the Senate Labor Committee, I can assure you, I too am tired of waiting for the start of this project. I advocated on behalf of contractors, their employees, and the Town of Islip residents by calling on the Department of Transportation to ensure that critical infrastructure projects like the Oakdale Merge are not only fully funded but completed in a timely manner.



LICA Oakdale Merge Press Conference, February 6, 2020

In January of this year, I had the opportunity to speak at the Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Transportation to express my support for this necessary project to Department of Transportation Commissioner, Marie Therese Dominguez. During the Transportation Hearing, government officials provided testimony to the Senate and Assembly fiscal committees. Now that a DOT study has taken place and the DOT has held public hearings, I would like to see a plan announced and ground to be broken.

**...it is critical, now more than ever,
that we invest in our local infrastructure projects...**

I will continue to advocate for this important infrastructure project which will ease the lives of many Long Islanders, make our roads safer and create numerous construction jobs. We need to provide our drivers with safe and seamless travel and I will not stop until the State mitigates this issue. With the COVID-19 pandemic rocking our nation and state this year, it is critical, now more than ever, that we invest in our local infrastructure projects to ensure the safety of our residents and support our construction industry with fully funded projects that will boost our economy and support the livelihood of those in the construction industry.

Roads, Rails & Traffic Tales with Lauren Scala

Traffic Anchor, NBC 4 New York & Special Correspondent, New York Live

For thousands of commuters across Long Island, New York and New Jersey, our cover subject is a familiar face. Lauren Scala, traffic anchor for NBC 4 New York, is often the first ray of sunshine to light up viewers' screens, long before the sun itself has risen. As the veteran traffic anchor for the 4:00-7:00 AM time slot, Lauren uses all her resources and reporting skills to make mornings—and the early morning commute—far less frustrating.

MILES & MEMORIES

As a child, long before televising her first traffic report, Lauren would spend free time tagging along on her father's frequent business trips to a printer in New Jersey. Driving with dad along many of the same roads she now reports on, is something she remembers fondly, having lost him to brain cancer in 2013. Whether sitting in traffic on the L.I.E. or stuck in a tunnel to New Jersey, Lauren treasures the quality time they shared and appreciates lessons learned along the way, including an informal education on "Local Roadways & Traffic 101". Something which has served her well in her chosen career.

Truth be told, traffic was not always to blame for their delays. Certain stops were planned so her dad could capture a photograph of a particular locomotive scheduled to pass by. As the owner/publisher of Weekend Chief railroad calendars, John J. Scala, was also a well known rail photographer and author of the book "Diesels of the Sunrise Trail" about Long Island Rail Road's locomotive history. While helping pack orders around the holidays for her father's customers, Lauren managed to learn about many



Lauren and her father, John

of the major railway systems from all across the country, which were depicted in his calendars. No wonder she has a clear advantage when it comes to road and rail reporting...

EARLY MORNING MUSTANG

Lauren grew up on Long Island, attending Mineola High School, home of the Mineola Mustangs. As a prototypical overachiever, Lauren excelled at sports, was elected class president for four straight years and served as president of her school's chapter of S.A.D.D. (Students Against Drunk Driving). Not surprisingly, she was also voted Homecoming Queen in 2000. More importantly, however, this is where the young Lauren Scala would record her first morning broadcast.

As part of the curriculum for a TV Production course, students recorded and produced a daily newscast, which was later broadcast to the entire school during homeroom. This is where Lauren (one of very few females in class) would learn the basics of TV production, including how to read a teleprompter, at the age of 16. Having a classroom studio filled with high quality equipment was a bonus, giving Lauren real-life experience using professional technology. Coincidentally (or prophetically, perhaps) Lauren recalls hearing the equipment had all been donated to the school by someone from NBC.

Thanks to an engaging and enthusiastic teacher (shout out to Mr. John Collins), Lauren developed skills that would pay dividends for years to come.



Lauren with her parents at Mineola High School Homecoming.

The experience she gained in high school would help her land several impressive internships and notable work with prominent companies throughout her college years and beyond.

ALL OR NOTHING

The next stepping stone in Lauren's path to traffic reporting, nearly ended before it began. As a communications major at Fordham University, internships play an important role in the education process, but once again, Lauren was ahead of the curve. As a sophomore, she was offered a coveted internship at J Records. However, the "Intro to Internships" prerequisite was a course reserved for college juniors. That's when Lauren first learned NOT to take "no" for an answer, persisting until she found a dean who would agree to work with her, allowing her to accept the internship for one college credit.

Was it an exclusive educational opportunity that drew Lauren to Clive Davis's new record label—or something more personal for a 19 year old college sophomore? How about an obsession with the 90's boy band phenomenon, O-TOWN, who happened to be signed by the very same record label?!

Although the internship at J Records began with a short-lived obsession, it would lead Lauren to greater opportunities like internships at *CosmoGIRL Magazine* and *Last Call with Carson Daly on NBC*, eventually landing her an internship at the New York office of DreamWorks Pictures for her final two semesters



Photo: Eduardo Patino

of college. After graduating, she enjoyed a short stint at MGM before returning full-time to the publicity and events department at DreamWorks. She recalls the job as "exciting but demanding" (envision scenes reminiscent of *The Devil Wears Prada*) but it gave Lauren the chance to work for her favorite director, the iconic Stephen Spielberg, although he was someone she rarely saw and (almost) never spoke to...

Fast forward several years. While working as an entertainment correspondent for EPIX, Lauren got the chance to do a 20 minute one-on-one sit down interview with her old boss, Mr. Steven Spielberg. It was an unforgettable career highlight that delighted her father at the time, almost as much as Lauren herself.



Steven Spielberg and Lauren Scala

DRIVEN

A job loss, due to a department cut, nearly had Lauren hitting the road out of New York to try something new. Luckily, a former co-worker helped her get an interview with *Time Out New York on Demand*, where she was hired to do publicity. However, with a startup company running the channel, Lauren ended up wearing many hats, eventually transitioning over to the production side of things. During this time, they allowed her to do some on-camera work, but when the company failed to monetize the channel a few years later, it was dissolved—along with Lauren's job.

This began the period Lauren refers to as the "couch years", when she took whatever assignments she could get, to earn a living. She freelanced, hosting some digital segments for *Time Out NY*, and worked for New York City's official TV channel, NYC-TV, hosting a show called "City Scoop." It was during this time, in 2008, when Lauren began making appearances as a "talking head" for *Time Out NY Magazine* on NBC's weekend news show, on a segment called "Best Bets." In 2009, Lauren was tapped by NYC-TV to host the annual New York Emmy Awards, where she recants a faint memory of chasing Katie Couric to the elevator to get a soundbite for her show.

It was Spring 2010, when Lauren joined WNBC as the host of a live, non-stop, trivia game show—an unusually challenging format. Her big break would come later that year when NBC 4 New York asked Lauren to fill in on the weekday morning show, for an early morning traffic reporter going on maternity leave.

Story continued on next page

Despite a lack of traffic reporting experience, Lauren recognized the opportunity it presented and the rest, as they say, is history. Since then, Lauren Scala has gone on to become one of the most talented and trusted traffic reporters in the tri-state region, earning Emmy's for both her transit reporting and features reporting for *New York Live*, a daily lifestyle show. You can also find her doing weekly dining segments on Taxi TV entitled "Backseat Bites."



ON THE JOB TRAINING:

Use what you know, learn what you don't (and get to bed early)!

Traffic reporting, in and of itself, can be challenging. Covering an entire metropolitan region with some of the world's busiest roadways and largest transit systems, is a whole other animal. But this "early morning Mustang" was up to the task.

Her training involved spending a few weeks with the team at Total Traffic & Weather Network in Rutherford, NJ, which serves as one of the main resources for traffic reporters in the tri-state area. In addition to NBC's cutting edge traffic graphics system, Lauren has 30 traffic cameras to monitor (with access to 900+ more online) as well as updates from multiple other sources, such as state DOT's, who provide information on issues including construction, road closures and more.

Having vast amounts of reliable information is important, but a good traffic reporter must be able to easily identify trouble spots and quickly relay that information to their viewers. For Lauren, that meant learning to recognize thousands of miles of roadways, interchanges, bridges, tunnels, and landmarks across all of Long Island, New York and New Jersey, in addition to local rail, subway, bus and ferry routes.

Thanks to the inherited rail knowledge and many driving miles logged with her father, Lauren developed a keen sense of direction. So much so, that her high school friends occasionally called her "Magellan", referencing the famous Portuguese explorer. While attending Fordham and living in the Bronx, Lauren got to know the five boroughs, Metro North and the NYC subway system. A few sections of New Jersey which were unfamiliar to her, were quickly mastered with the help of Lauren's self-described photographic memory.

The only remaining challenge for Lauren (other than continually searching for better words to describe "delays"), is learning to love the hours. Despite nearly a decade of doing so, she admits that rising at 2:00 AM to be in the office by 3:00 and on-air at 4:00 is still nothing that comes naturally nor easily. She appreciates finishing work early, leaving time to enjoy the rest of the day or take care of personal business. However, heading to bed at 7:30 each night isn't terribly conducive to an exciting personal life. But, the job is worth it. The early days of turning in at 10:00 PM are long gone. To be sharp and at her best for her viewers, Lauren now makes sure she gets the sleep she needs.

RELIABLE & RELATABLE

In this business, being your best means working on your delivery and connecting with your viewers. Great graphics and accurate information are important, but being perceived as authentic, reliable, and relatable to your audience is paramount, especially in a major market. For Long Island, that means understanding whatever happens here, happens ON Long Island (not IN it, like Vegas) and anything outside of Nassau or Suffolk Counties is not really "Long Island". For New York City, it's being a genuwine New Yawka who knows how to properly pronounce tongue twisting landmarks like the Kosciuszko Bridge and the Van Wyck (WICK, not WIKE) Expressway. But even the distinguished Lauren Scala gets a pass on that one...

She knows that her viewers are hard working men and women, who are up and on the road before dawn... including many from our industry.

Viewers were not shy to question the new traffic reporter's local knowledge when she reported traffic along the Van Wyck Expressway (pronouncing it Van WIKE). According to some, a true New Yorker (as well as Wikipedia, apparently) would know it's pronounced Van WICK. But is it??

Although most viewers are unaware of why Lauren uses this purposeful (mis)pronunciation, she let us in on the secret. Early in her career, during her very first days of training, the folks from Total Traffic had received a request from the family members of the former Mayor of New York (for whom the Van Wyck Expressway is named), requesting the name be reported as it should be, and pronounced Van WIKE. Out of respect for the family (despite continued criticism by a handful of vocal viewers) Lauren continues to oblige.

Lauren's air of authenticity comes from having spent hours riding, driving or sitting in traffic on the very same roads she reports about, speaking with first hand knowledge of typical tie-ups, usual slow-downs and ongoing construction. She helps her audience by focusing more heavily on "surprise" delays (the accidents, disabled vehicles, police activity, etc.) which cause the greatest disruption to peoples' drive times, believing most commuters already account for typical delays due to volume related traffic.

Story continued on page 22

A close-up photograph of a construction worker's hands holding a white hard hat. The worker is wearing a yellow tool belt and blue jeans. The background shows the wooden framing of a building under construction.

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Continually going the extra mile to improve her broadcasts, Lauren was one of the first traffic anchors to report on ferry service and also firmly believes NBC's comprehensive coverage on rail services is second to none. She places visual indicators of trouble spots on her maps, so viewers who may have missed her verbal report, can still see the information they need at quick glance. Lauren will even investigate the occasional "mysterious" social media tweet which she knows can sometimes prove to be an early indicator of a major delay or incident which has yet to materialize or be reported.

Lauren gratefully acknowledges the tremendous help she receives daily from her production assistant and crew, and the outstanding team of colleagues who have supported her since day one. The NBC 4 network is equally supportive, providing the latest tools and technology that help make her broadcasts and special segments even more exciting and informative. She recognizes how lucky she is to be celebrating over 10 years with this exceptional, award-winning organization.

This environment makes it easy for Lauren to keep that million dollar smile on her face, which she hopes is contagious. She is well aware that her job, in a nutshell, is to deliver bad news on a daily basis, yet she manages do it in a way that

viewers tune in again each morning. She knows that her viewers are hard working men and women, who are up and on the road before dawn... including many from our industry. Other early morning commuters include essential workers in healthcare, transit or sanitation, or commercial drivers delivering food and supplies to stock store shelves, and they are all counting on Lauren to deliver the traffic news that will help make their day just a little bit easier.

COVID & THE COMMUTE: The Road(s) Less Traveled
Sadly, there is little that can make these troubled times any easier. The coronavirus crisis hit our region with a vengeance and affected every aspect of our lives and our economy. No one could have imagined a scenario that would shut down cities the size of New York within a matter of days and remain unrecognizable for months.

Continuing to work from her studio every day throughout the pandemic, Lauren retained more sense of normalcy than most, but a few scenes she witnessed epitomized the new reality... like people driving on the L.I.E., through Queens, at speeds near 100 mph, or the group of friends that carried a sofa into the middle of Fifth Avenue to capture a selfie of the surreal situation, an image Lauren later tweeted, drawing quite a bit of attention on social media.



Lauren Scala , traffic reporting at NBC 4 New York

I was shocked to learn Lauren had worked through the pandemic and frankly, questioned why. During the height of the crisis, I had personally driven from the Nassau/Suffolk border into midtown Manhattan in 32 minutes door-to-door, while literally passing less than 10 cars in either direction along the way. Why on earth did we need traffic reporters?

Early in the COVID-19 crisis, Lauren also took note of the clear up-tick in the number of construction projects happening on our roadways.

Lauren was quick to point out the importance of her role during this time. Trains, subways and busses were needed to get essential employees to their jobs but service schedules were changing, shutdowns were imminent and safety requirements were being implemented. Finding reliable, up-to-the-minute information amongst the daily headlines was difficult for many and Lauren's reporting served as an important lifeline. She was determined to help her viewers, as these were many of the very same people who helped our region make it through the worst days of the pandemic. But with less traffic to report, Lauren used the extra time to host a "Grateful for You" segment, dedicated to recognizing and thanking essential workers, which aired during some of the darkest days.

TRAFFIC & TRANSPORTATION

Lauren has already seen a noticeable increase in traffic (vehicular, cyclists and pedestrians), perhaps in part, because her time slot is comprised heavily of commercial drivers and delivery services that keep the supplies rolling in. But beginning as early as the Phase 2 re-opening of New York City, she noted a definitive rise in activity. Most recently, she's spotted steady daily flows of cars lining up to get into the city's parking garages, indicating that more people are heading back to work in their vehicles. She believes people are (and should be) coming back to the trains and subways, for now, while wearing masks and respecting social distance guidelines.

Early on in the COVID-19 crisis, Lauren also took note of the clear up-tick in the number of construction projects happening on our roadways. Rare are the times when road construction is a welcome site in NYC, but with heavy construction deemed essential, local and state governments took advantage of empty roads, accelerating time tables on planned projects and infrastructure improvements.

On a related note, I asked Lauren for her thoughts on some of our region's transportation infrastructure. Opting to leave it to "the professionals", Lauren passed on providing a hypothetical "wish list" of traffic-reducing infrastructure ideas, but believes that many of the issues plaguing our highway and transportation systems are the result of age. Most of our infrastructure was designed and built decades ago, when current numbers of both people and vehicles could not have been imagined, making it difficult to accommodate today's volume. However, Lauren did offer some casual commentary and observations on some other traffic topics:

The Long Island Expressway (LIE): Even as a child, Lauren remembers the LIE as always having congestion problems. Most notably today, she says the portions running through Queens are particularly horrendous. The Kew Gardens interchange is another source of constant traffic frustration for commuters as well.

The new bridge and toll improvements in NY appear to be a toss up. Agreeing that both the new Governor Mario M. Cuomo and Kosciuszko bridges are beautiful, especially at night when illuminated, Lauren sees the Governor's bridge functioning well with no noticeable problems. However, she continues to see fairly regular delays and backups at the Kosciuszko bridge, as well as at many toll plazas, despite the recent transition to cashless tolling.

When asked her personal opinion on what contributes most to a crawling commute, Lauren cites the inconsiderate driver. In particular, the drivers who fail to know (or worse yet, choose to ignore) basic rules of the road. She firmly believes that abiding by a few simple rules, such as leaving the left lane open to allow faster traffic to pass, could cut commute times. I'll remember to move over the next time Lauren is in the lane behind me...

THE LONG & WINDING ROAD

Lauren endures the occasional commute back to Long Island to visit family or host her annual favorite "Clear the Shelters" segment, reporting from local shelters like North Shore Animal League or Huntington's Little Shelter to promote pet adoptions. But as a Manhattan resident for the last 14 years, she has become a bit more city-centric. Recently, she began driving herself to the office for a bit more "control" and less worry if her Lyft driver will show up on time. Luckily, there's not much traffic to contend with at 3:00 AM these days, other than the occasional sanitation truck.

She is confident that sometime in the not too distant future, people will once again return to the rails, step on a subway, hop on a bus and move back to their apartments in the city. And before long, she'll be busy reporting on thousands of Long Island commuters, crammed in their cars, idling on the Long Island Expressway, generating traffic jams worthy of her best broadcasting efforts.

Some may wish the days of historic delays and traffic tie-ups would become a permanent casualty of the COVID-19 crisis. But I suspect Lauren may feel differently. For without them, she might have missed out on miles of memories with her father.

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Check out our "Traffic & Tidbits" Q&A with Lauren on page 25



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Traffic & Tidbits with Lauren Scala



Q&A

Q. What's your favorite LIRR or Metro North rail station?

A. Mineola, of course.

Q. As a "foodie" what's your favorite Long Island restaurant.

A. A perennial favorite is Piccolo's of Mineola, but Mama Theresa's pizza is also excellent!

Q. What's your go-to beverage when you need a pick me up?

A. Cafe Bustelo

Q. What's the best part of having such an early start for your job?

A. I'm honored to get people started first thing in the morning. I also like being finished with work early, having the rest of the day to enjoy!

Q. What's the worst part?

A. Having to be in bed so early.

Q. Do you prefer reporting on slower traffic days or busier ones?

A. Heavy traffic. It's more dynamic and makes the day go faster.

Q. Which weather event is worst for traffic? Snow, rain, sun glare, high winds, etc.

A. Snow is the worst, followed pretty closely by rain.

Q. What's some of the best things you've witnessed during reporting?

A. I've seen some incredible rescues, people pinned in a car and being rescued by first responders, it makes you truly appreciate the dedication and courage of our fire and police departments.

Q. What's some of the worst you've seen?

A. Any accident where a fatality occurs is tragic. It's difficult to think that someone won't be returning home to family at the end of the day.

Q. Are there any particularly humorous traffic memories?

A. It seems like cargo spills provide the most fodder for entertainment (once we know the driver is OK, of course). A Budweiser truck once overturned on the Gowanus Expressway, taking forever to clean up. Viewers of course jumped on the chance to offer their assistance to help! And a toilet paper spill on the Northern State Parkway (think "Quilted Northern") gave us all a good laugh for a while.

Q. What are your pet peeves about other drivers?

A. Driver's in the left lane who don't move over for faster traffic. It causes so many unnecessary delays. Those drivers need to pay attention, be more considerate, and follow basic "rules of the road," and look in their rearview mirror more often.

Q. Are you afraid that the advancement of traffic apps and technology like GPS may make your job obsolete?

A. No. I believe most people are curious by nature and really want to know WHY there's a delay, as much as the fact that there is a delay. The cause is something most apps don't tell you. The ones that do, aren't very reliable since the source is unverified.

Q. Working on live TV, there are sure to be moments where you say, do or report something in error, especially early on. How did you handle it?

A. I'm grateful to have colleagues that are honest enough to tell me about it, but then help me correct it or provide advice on how to fix it or do it better next time. I like to pay that forward and now do the same to help others!

Selling Your Construction Company

by Daniel Castellano, CPA - Marcum LLP

Among the many outcomes of the pandemic is time for reflection. You've worked hard all of your life, building your construction company into the success that it is today. And in this moment of reflection, you may begin to assess your options, including the possibility of retirement. But what to do with the company? There are several options, with inevitable consequences.

You could liquidate the business. But you risk taking a significant discount on its value, especially in this business climate.

You could pass it along to a family member. However the track record for second generation owners is not very favorable. How about selling to your key personnel? The concern is that there are no guarantees they will be able to manage the business, buy you out, and still prosper financially.

You could establish and fund an ESOP (employee stock ownership) over a period of time. It's a better option since the buyout can usually be accomplished with pre-tax dollars.

Or – you could sell the business to an interested third party. It is this that has the most varied options and the one we'll review here. There are tax implications to both the buyer and the seller on a sale of an

S Corporation to a third party. In basic form, the options include:

- Stock sale
- Asset sale
- Stock sale treated as an asset sale

For our purposes, we will focus on a sale by a “flow through” entity (S Corp, LLC, etc.) that has generated goodwill during its existence, through customer and vendor relationships, and has a bonding program and bank lines of credit in place. We will also assume that there is an agreed upon transaction price and payment terms.

Stock Sale

In a stock sale, gain is recognized to the Seller by the excess of the purchase price over the Seller's tax basis. Tax basis is the seller's original capital contribution, increased by profits retained in the business and decreased by dividend distributions. The seller is afforded long term capital gain treatment on the sale and the buyer's cost of the purchase is generally only recovered upon selling the stock of the acquired company at a future date.

If the payment terms of the deal are for an installment sale, one in which the Seller obtains a promissory note from the buyer to be paid over a certain amount of



time, taxes are paid as the note payments, both principal and interest, are received. The interest portion is treated as ordinary income. The amount of capital gain recognized each year is the principal portion of the payments received multiplied by the gross profit percentage of the entire transaction. A stock sale is usually preferred by the Seller.

Asset Sale

An asset sale is generally preferred by the Buyer and can eliminate hidden liability issues. An asset sale requires an allocation of the price of the various assets being purchased, including goodwill. This allocation must be specified in the purchase and sale agreement and requires both the Seller and the Buyer to report the allocation on their respective tax returns.

Taxation to the seller can be a combination of capital gain (sale of goodwill) and ordinary income (sale of inventory, accounts receivable, etc.). If there is an allocation of the purchase price to a consulting services agreement, it is treated as an ordinary business expense to the Buyer and ordinary income to the Seller.

Stock Sale Treated as an Asset Sale

In a stock sale the Buyer may try to negotiate that the transaction contains a special election under Internal Revenue Code 338H10 so that it is treated as an asset sale. Under this election the S corporation shareholders are deemed to be receiving the sales proceeds in liquidation of the S

Corporation. The Buyer gets tax deductions and the Seller, although paying one level of tax, receives ordinary income tax treatment on the sale of inventory and receivables, together with depreciation recapture. This is obviously beneficial to the Buyer and may call for renegotiation of the purchase price downward to level the playing field.

Other Considerations for Sellers

Net Investment Income Tax. This is in addition to the capital gains tax and generally raises the Federal tax rate from 20% to 23.8%. However, if the Seller materially participates in the business, the 3.8% surtax is not applicable.

Section 199A "QBI" Deduction. This is attributable to ordinary income recognized on the sale by the Seller and can reduce the marginal Federal income tax rate from 37% to 29.6%.

According to a recent study from Barlow Research Associates, the average small business owner is 60 years old. Of these, 40% are considering closing their businesses. As you reflect on the possibilities, you need to consider whether a sale is a viable option.



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The Importance of Quality Reporting

Fair Media Council

by Jaci Clement, CEO & Executive Director, Fair Media Council

It's hard to have a business conversation on Long Island without mention of traffic or weather, isn't it?

In-person meetings—when we were able to hold them—seldom started on time, because someone was always stuck in traffic. Traffic costs us, business-wise, in terms of productivity. Personally, it cuts into our quality time. Yet, our traffic-related expenses pale in comparison to what the weather churns up around here: Extreme storm activity, as we saw with Tropical Storm Isaias, blows out power and connectivity, leaving us not only in the dark, but vulnerable. The changing nature of the weather makes it now commonplace for one neighborhood block to be decimated by high winds and downed trees, while the next block remains unscathed.

You know all this because you live it.

What you may not realize is that it's the traffic and weather reporters who are not only the workhorses of your local news teams but the linchpins around whom news programming is actually built. (Weather always came at the end of the broadcast, not because it was the least important news of the day, but because it was what kept you watching til the end.)

One of the main criteria for determining how "important" a news story is, centers on how many people will be affected by the news. Traffic and weather impacts all of us, which is why this kind of news is extremely important. The difficulty comes in the unpredictability—how a storm may hit the north shore, but not the south. Or how traffic on the L.I.E. slows to a crawl for hours, then suddenly opens up and the 495 can no longer be mistaken for a parking lot. In order to cover these stories well, the reporters need to know the terrain. And they need to be able to work under extreme deadlines and deliver news stories in real-time. What's really tricky about this part of the news business is when these reporters are "wrong," you instantly know it. No other area of reporting is as exposed to criticism as the traffic and weather reporters.

To that end, here's something to keep in mind: The purpose of these jobs isn't to let you know which day of the week will be the best beach day, and the best route to take to get there. That's merely a side benefit. What your traffic and weather reporters really do is work to keep you and your family safe. Putting your safety first is why sometimes these reports seem too extreme or may even be termed "sensational" by the casual observer. Erring on the side of caution is necessary because the alternative is unthinkable. Maybe if more people understood that, these reporters would be more widely recognized for the critical role they play in our communities and our lives. "A tip of the Stetson," as Dan Rather would put it, to LICA for acknowledging the hard work of these journalists.

Now that we live in a digital world, our news is ever-evolving. It's no longer the news you remember. That's what makes the work of the Fair Media Council so important to our world today. Our mission, to advocate for quality news and work to create a media-savvy society, makes us a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization unlike any in the country. And we're proudly headquartered on Long Island, where we help businesses and nonprofit organizations understand how to navigate the media landscape with confidence and use news to improve their lives, businesses and communities. We thank the Long Island Contractors' Association for your support.



Jaci Clement is CEO & Executive Director of the Fair Media Council. She may be reached at jaci@fairmediacouncil.org. To find out more about FMC, log on to www.fairmediacouncil.org

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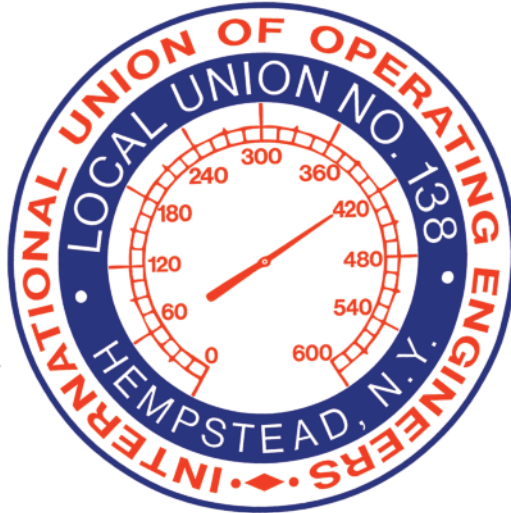
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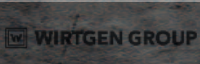
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