

**LONG ISLAND RAIL ROAD COMMUTER
COUNCIL**

**OFFICE OF SUFFOLK COUNTY EXECUTIVE
STEVE BELLONE**

MELVILLE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

TOWN OF BABYLON

OFFICE OF SENATOR CHUCK SCHUMER

TRI-STATE TRANSPORTATION CAMPAIGN

VISION LONG ISLAND

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Symposium Outlines Transit and Development Opportunities for Long Island

HAUPPAUGE, NY—Today, over one hundred attendees turned out to hear presentations on how bus rapid transit, also known as BRT, could bolster Long Island's transit system, create jobs, and make Long Island more sustainable.

The event builds upon Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone's "Connect Long Island Plan," which aims to link key transit-oriented developments to several Long Island Rail Road stations and further support smart growth through the implementation of a BRT system along Route 110.

"Bus Rapid Transit makes sense for Long Island as we continue to build towards a growing economy," said County Executive Bellone. "Long Island faces many transportation challenges and it is imperative that we take a regional approach to these issues. This symposium provides an opportunity for all of Long Island to look at BRT as an achievable way to approach transportation issues and economic development in the region. I see BRT as a critical transportation initiative that can create a transportation network connecting commercial, educational and residential facilities on Long Island and provide alternative means of transportation that will spur economic growth while protecting our environment."

The event featured representatives from the offices of Senator Chuck Schumer, County Executive Bellone, and Babylon Town Supervisor Rich Schaeffer. They were joined by regional and national BRT experts, who discussed successful projects from their communities and throughout the world.

Annie Weinstock, Director of US and Africa BRT programs for the Institute for Transportation and Development, provided an overview of 'Gold Standard' BRT systems, which serve as examples of best practices for transportation departments nationwide.

To highlight the wide range of forms that bus rapid transit can take, a response panel of transit planners and experts—which included representatives from the New York City Department of Transportation, NJ Transit and the Hartford Capitol Region Council of Governments—gave presentations on BRT systems operating, or being built, in the region. The panelists highlighted system features that speed up buses, like dedicated bus lanes or technology allowing riders to pay for service before boarding, reducing the amount of time buses idle at stations.

“Successful bus rapid transit can come in many forms,” said Veronica Vanterpool, executive director of Tri-State Transportation Campaign. “Today’s speakers were able to provide a broad overview of the wide range of systems that could benefit businesses, communities, and riders on Long Island through improved economic development potential and reduced congestion.”

“The vehicular traffic clogging Route 110 and other Long Island arteries must be reduced. It is time to take action by instituting smart, well planned projects such as a user friendly and community supportive Bus Rapid Transit System, said Michael DeLuise, president of the Melville Chamber of Commerce. “When we help employers, employees, customers, students and neighbors gain the ability to move easily without delay from place to place we will be planting a seed that will bolster our economy and enhance Long Island’s quality of life in many ways.”

A recurring theme during the event was that successful BRT systems depend upon smart land use policy.

“Bus Rapid Transit options are long overdue for the LI region,” said Eric Alexander, executive director of Vision Long Island. “This mode of travel is uniquely suited for Suffolk County’s Connect LI plan and the land use changes that many of the local Towns are embarking on.”

Other attendees noted that, although BRT has the power to create new development and transit arteries, it could also enhance Long Island’s existing transit infrastructure.

“Bus Rapid Transit may have the potential to transform how commuters get to and from the rail stations and may be a catalyst for improving options for reverse commuters,” said Long Island Rail Road Commuter Council Chair Mark Epstein.

The symposium was organized by Tri-State Transportation Campaign, the Town of Babylon, the Suffolk County Department of Planning and Economic Development, the Melville Chamber of Commerce, Vision Long Island, the Long Island Rail Road Commuter Council, and sponsored by the Porter-Trejo Action Network, the Huntington Township Chamber of Commerce, the Long Island Federation of Labor, AFL/CIO and the Long Island Business Council.

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Tri-State Transportation Campaign is a non-profit organization working toward a more balanced, transit-friendly, and equitable transportation system in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut.