



**Testimony of Ryan Lynch, Associate Director
Public Works and Transportation Committee**

May 7, 2013

631-742-7528

rlynch@tstc.org

My name is Ryan Lynch, and I am the associate director for the Tri-State Transportation Campaign, a non-profit transportation policy watchdog organization dedicated to creating a more balanced, environmentally friendly and equitable transportation system in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on IR1295, an amended resolution to use new state revenues to expand Suffolk County Transit service to Sundays and evenings.

While Tri-State's preference would be to see all increases in State Transit Operating Assistance go to service expansion, the amended legislation before the legislature is a compromise that dedicates \$1.1 million in funding to needed expanded Sunday and evening hour service, but also recognizes that County's precarious fiscal situation. Importantly, the legislation also seeks to make Suffolk County Transit whole by applying for Job Access Reverse Commute funding, an important and highly applicable funding source for the type of service Suffolk County is trying to provide. We strongly support this JARC application and have submitted a letter in support.

Moving forward, however, Suffolk County must do more to reach out to New York State to ensure it is receiving its equitable share of transit funding. New York State only contributes to roughly 30 percent of Suffolk County Transit's operating budget, while Nassau County's bus system receives over 50 percent of its operating budget from the state. Suffolk County has done a good job of funding its bus system, and should be rewarded with increased state transit funding which would allow for even greater service expansions to more Sunday routes, later into the evenings and more frequent service on existing routes. A first step towards achieving this must be a more proactive approach to seeking funding.

Tri-State also supports IR 1349, a resolution to accept a grant from the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC) for the purpose of studying the feasibility of Bus Rapid Transit in Suffolk County.

Bus Rapid Transit, or BRT, is a 21st century transit option that could be a way to help improve Long Island's transit network, develop more sustainably and grow more smartly. Last October, Tri-State held a BRT symposium here in Hauppauge to highlight the potential BRT has to offer in changing Long Island's landscape, spurring economic development and providing greater transportation choice in the region.

True BRT entails pre-board fare collection, real-time bus information technology, traffic signal priority, separated bus lanes and permanent stations that encourage transit-oriented development.

However, for BRT to be truly successful, it must be planned in corridors with appropriate characteristics. A feasibility study for BRT in Suffolk County is a logical first step towards identifying these corridors, and deciding where BRT would thrive and encourage the land uses that support viable systems.

We urge the Legislature to accept these funds as a way to begin a broader conversation about the future of rapid transit and transit-oriented development in Suffolk County.

Thank you.