

14. DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS (INCLUDING TRANSPORTATION)

The Department of Public Works is headed by a Commissioner who serves at the pleasure of the County Executive with the approval of the County Legislature. The Commissioner must be a professional engineer licensed in New York State, as must be the Chief Deputy Commissioner and the County Chief Engineer who are appointed by the Commissioner. The major divisions of the Department and their functions include the following:

Sanitation Division, operates and maintains 21 sewage treatment plants in the County. (The independent Sewer Agency, of which the DPW Commissioner is a member, reviews and inspects the design and construction of privately operated sewer projects.) Functions include permitting, industrial waste pre-treatment regulation and laboratory support.

Buildings Division, headed by the County Architect, is responsible for designing, construction, repairing and maintaining all County-owned buildings.

Highway Division designs, constructs and maintains the County roads, bridges, docks, marinas, park preserves and beach-erosion projects. The Division also performs traffic studies, does highway markings, and operates traffic lights and signals. Additionally, the County provides dredging services to the respective Towns within the County. The County has cooperative agreements with several towns and villages for maintenance and snow removal.

Highway construction is funded through the County Capital Budget. Operating funds for the Department of Public Works come from County property and sales taxes. In addition, the County receives construction and maintenance money from the state motor vehicle and gasoline taxes under the Construction and Highways Improvement Program (CHIP). The state returns 25% of the vehicle license fees collected in the County and 10% of the statewide motor fuel taxes divided among the state's counties based on mileage ratios. The County also receives aid from the U.S. Department of Transportation for Federally approved construction projects.

The Department assists in surveying and engineering projects at the request of other County departments.

Highway/Fleet Maintenance Division is responsible for the fueling, maintenance and repair of over 2,400 County vehicles and 400 pieces of specialized equipment.

Vector Control Division is responsible for mosquito control in Suffolk County. It is the largest and most technologically advanced mosquito control program in New York State. Without control, mosquitoes could reach unbearable levels in many parts of the County. More importantly, mosquitoes are capable of transmitting several types of arboviral encephalitis and other serious illnesses. The Division uses an integrated control program, which is recognized as the most effective and environmentally sound approach. The Division conducts mosquito surveillance and uses a full range of control techniques, including water management, biological control, biopesticides and conventional pesticides. The Division also combines mosquito control with wetlands restoration, in cooperation with Federal, state and private environmental agencies. The Division works closely with the Department of Health Services.

Aviation Division provides for the administration, maintenance and leasing at the County-owned Francis S. Gabreski Airport on County Road 31 in Westhampton Beach. More details are provided at the end of this chapter.

Transportation Division (1) plans transportation projects for the County; (2) participates in the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC), which does regional planning and distribution of Federal grant monies for highway and transit projects; (3) prepares and administers County grant applications for Federal projects; and (4) plans and administers the County bus program - Suffolk County Transit (SCT) and Suffolk County Accessible Transportation (SCAT).

Because of Long Island's length and the dispersed nature of its development, transportation

on the Island is complex. There is an extensive network of highways, parkways, several bus services, private and municipally owned airports, numerous private ferry services to Fire Island, Shelter Island and Connecticut, and the State-owned Long Island Rail Road. By far, the major movement of people and goods in the County is via the highway system, consisting of more than 6,000 miles of Federal, State, County, town and village roads, of which 1,400 lane-miles are County roads, and more than 3,600 are town roads constructed and maintained by more than 30 local highway departments within the County.

The regional planning component of the Transportation Division, under the requirements of the 1990 amendments to the Clean Air Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA 21) looks at alternatives to ground, freight and waterborne transportation, environmental impacts, integration and efficiency of use, rather than simply adding highway capacity to relieve congestion.

New York State Departments of Transportation and Motor Vehicles

The State Department of Transportation maintains its Region #10 offices in Hauppauge. Its responsibility is planning, design, construction, maintenance and traffic control of State highways and the Long Island Expressway in the Nassau-Suffolk region. The State Department of Motor Vehicles' six offices in Suffolk County are located in Hauppauge, Huntington, North Amityville, Medford, Port Jefferson and Riverhead. Its responsibilities include licensing and registration of drivers, vehicles and boats.

Buses

Suffolk County Transit is not yet a complete system. It has implemented more bus route extensions, more frequent service, better coordination, especially with the rail service, and is attracting more ridership. In 1999, SCT carried 4.5 million passengers.

SCT owns 141 buses, all air-conditioned and with wheelchair lifts, acquired with 80% Federal, 10% State and 10% local funding. Most are conventional size and are used on regular local bus routes. In addition, the County operates 24 ten-passenger vans in its SCAT service.

The County maintains oversight for fares, routes and customer relations, but the buses are leased, driven and maintained by the private sector. This provides the County with cost savings and flexibility. The bus service operates Monday through Saturday. SCT serves all hospitals, County health clinics, the courts and the colleges, 36 out of the 42 railroad stations, and makes connections with the Orient Point and Port Jefferson ferries to Connecticut. In 1996, 57% of the SCT riders went to and from work, 10% went to and from school, 13% went shopping, with the remainder taking miscellaneous trips. The cost of operating Suffolk County Transit is borne by the passengers (26%), State operating assistance (40%), and the County budget (34%).

In cooperation with the Department of Social Services, the Division has minted tokens which are given to clients for use on the buses. Tickets in booklets of 50 are available for sale to agencies, groups and organizations which can provide their clients or members with prepaid bus and transfer tickets. These tickets can be used by Social Services clients, senior citizens and individuals with disabilities.

County bus schedules may be obtained by calling Suffolk County Transit Bus Information, (631) 852-5200, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., or from the Internet at www.sct-bus.org.

In addition to SCT, Nassau County has five bus lines that serve neighboring areas in Suffolk County. Huntington Town has its own bus system (HART), and the Village of Patchogue has municipal bus service.

Express buses from the North and South Forks are available for travel to New York City. Short Line and Greyhound provide transportation to upstate destinations.

Under the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act, Suffolk County has implemented a paratransit system (SCAT) that provides a curb-to-curb, reservation service schedule with individual pick-up for people unable to use the regular bus system without assistance of another person.

Ferries

Weather permitting, the ferry services from Port Jefferson to Bridgeport, Connecticut, and from Orient Point or Fishers Island to New

London, Connecticut, run year-round, carrying foot passengers, cars, and trucks. Each trip takes approximately 1.5 hours. Ferries from Montauk to New London and Block Island run in the summer only. There is a year-round ferry from Greenport to the north of Shelter Island and from North Haven to the south of the Island. Ferries to Fire Island depart from Bay Shore, Sayville and Patchogue. They carry no cars. Information about service to the Fire Island National Seashore is available at (631) 475-1665.

Long Island Rail Road

The LIRR, a subsidiary of the New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority, is the largest and busiest commuter train system in the country. Schedule and fare information is available 24 hours a day at (631) 231-5477. Over 660 trains, using approximately 183 miles of track in Suffolk County, carry more than 220,000 riders a day. More than 80% are commuters, and most of the service is in the western part of the County. The north shore line to Port Jefferson is electrified from New York City to Huntington, the

main line to Greenport is electrified to Ronkonkoma, and the south shore line to Montauk is electrified to Babylon. The connecting line between Hicksville and Babylon and the extensions beyond electrification are served by diesel locomotives. The LIRR has special tracks that carry about 10% of local freight, but most freight is trucked over the highways. The new Electronic Data Interchange system (EDI) monitors shipping from sender to destination at the Fresh Pond Terminal in Queens. From there, freight is transferred because freight trains cannot enter the railway tunnels under the East River into Manhattan.

Those wishing to take a bicycle on the train must apply to the LIRR Public Affairs Department. Forms are available at railroad stations. Station maintenance and parking are the responsibility of local government.

Airports

The major airport in Suffolk County is Long Island MacArthur Airport, owned and operated



Photo by Henry Mangels

Job's Lane, Southampton, NY

Opened 1664

by the Town of Islip. Long Island MacArthur Airport is served by Southwest Airlines, U.S. Airways Express, American Eagle, Spirit Airline, Continental Express, Delta Express, and Trans International Express (to Atlantic City). In 1999, the airport handled 1.9 million passengers and 1,500 tons of freight. Information about service at the airport is available at (631) 467-3210.

The Francis S. Gabreski Airport was acquired by Suffolk County from the United States Air Force in 1970. There is no scheduled air carrier service from Gabreski.

At the south end of the 1,486-acre airport, 88.5 acres are leased by the New York Air National Guard 106th Air-Sea Rescue Squadron. The Air

National Guard site is shared seasonally May-October with the Coast Guard Helicopter Rescue Unit. The Air National Guard Unit is one of three in the United States that provides highly specialized sea rescue services. Gabreski Airport is also home for many government and not-for-profit agencies including Peconic Community Council, Association for the Help of Retarded Children (AHRC), Southampton Fire Marshall, and Suffolk County Department of Economic Development.

LaGuardia Airport and John F. Kennedy International Airport, run by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, are located in Queens County and are accessible by car, limousine, or bus.



Photo © Adam Gaus

Argyle Park, Babylon Village, NY