

# OFFICE OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE

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## ***PRESS RELEASE***

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **You Can Get There From Here**

### **Legislature Adopts Gregory Initiative Directing Suffolk Mass Transit To Offer Trip-Maker Services**

*AMITYVILLE, NY*— As gas prices continue to hover near the \$4 mark, mass transit is increasingly becoming the only option for large numbers of Suffolk County residents to travel in their daily lives. Since these bus riders make up such a large portion of the workforce, public transportation not only moves people but is an important driver of the County's economic engine as well. That's why last night the County Legislature unanimously adopted a measure by Majority Leader and 15th district Legislator DuWayne Gregory (D— Amityville) that will require *Suffolk Transit* to offer trip-maker services to the riding public via an online, state sponsored transportation portal.

If you've ever tried to plan out a how to get somewhere in the County on a bus using *Suffolk Transit's* maps, you've probably given up. After getting lost running your finger through the maze of intertwining lines that denote the routes that connect to the numerous colored dots that represent various stops, you realize you'll need a degree in cartography to navigate where you're going.

Frustrated but not deterred, maybe you decide to rely on technology to solve your destination dilemma. A 2012 national Nielsen study found that more than 50% of all mobile phone owners have smart phones. A similarly veined Pew study revealed that more people use their smart phones to get directions (20%) than to get help during an emergency (19%).

So If you're lucky enough own a smart phone perhaps you think, "No problem, I'll just type in my location and destination addresses, hit the 'bus' icon and follow the directions." Except that the *Suffolk Transit* isn't available on any of the leading commercial trip-maker apps. That's in part, because it costs tens of thousands of dollars to subscribe to those well-known, trip-maker service engines.

— MORE, MORE, MORE —

But the New York State Department of Transportation has its own mass transit, trip planner portal. *511 New York* is a one-stop, all-encompassing Web service (and telephone) offering information on transportation services – including a trip planner – and travel conditions throughout the entire State. This information is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week via the *511NY* website (<http://www.511ny.org/tripplanner/default.aspx?area=8>). It's also available as a free downloadable app on both the *iOS* and *Android* platforms.

*Suffolk Transit* is one of almost 70 diverse transportation providers whose routes and schedules are available on the *511NY* trip maker service. Not only are New York State mass transit systems available, but public transportation carries throughout the entire tri-state area, including train and ferry operators, are as well. With connections from the Adirondacks to Amityville, the *511NY* trip-maker helps travelers get to their destination, utilizing multiple forms of transportation (if necessary). But Suffolk bus riders unaware of the NYSDOT's *511NY* tool have no other access to a trip-maker to get them around the County via road-based public transportation.

That's because currently *Suffolk Transit* doesn't have a link on its website directing riders to *511NY*. Westchester County's *Bee-Line* Buses do link to *511NY* while *NICE* (Nassau County's public transportation) makes its trip-planner services available not only on *511NY* but also on *GoogleTransit* as well.

Gregory's common sense legislation simply requires that within 45 days the County's Division of Transportation must establish a link from *Suffolk Transit* to *511NY*. It then also directs DIT to use existing funds within their 2013 \$63 million planning budget to publicize the link to the NYSDOT's *511NY* trip-maker website and the corresponding smartphone apps.

"Whether it's the person who bags your groceries, your waiter, or the orderly who keeps the hospital sanitary; a vital, hardworking, modest earning portion of our labor force depends on public transportation to get to their jobs and to provide for their families," says Gregory. "So it's imperative that we keep the service going – and along with it – our economy. Establishing this link and publicizing this service will make *Suffolk Transit* more useful to even more riders, all while not increasing costs. That's something that bus riders – and non-riders alike – should be able to be on board with."