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NEWS FROM THE 11TH DISTRICT

A Bridge Too Far – by Suffolk County Legislator Tom Barraga

“A Bridge Too Far,” a 1977 epic war film concerning the failed allied World War II “Operation Market Garden” in the Netherlands, got its name from a British General who said at the time “I think we may be going a bridge too far”. Certainly in the context of cross sound bridges we, Long Islanders, have suffered greatly over six decades from a bridge too far. Residents of Nassau and Suffolk Counties have wasted millions of hours over the years traveling west by automobile to cross the Throgs Neck Bridge in order to proceed to upstate regions of New York or to New England and have endured the same travel hardships as they try to return to their homes on Long Island.

Ever since 1968 when former Governor Nelson Rockefeller promised, and then reneged on his commitment to allow Master Builder Robert Moses to construct a cross sound bridge from Oyster Bay to Rye; a lack of leadership has existed to drive and construct this vital project.

New York Governors’ Rockefeller, Wilson, Carey, Mario Cuomo, Pataki, Spitzer and Patterson exhibited no leadership on this issue. The current Governor, Andrew Cuomo, is in the process of constructing a replacement Tappan Zee Bridge which is sorely needed based on a tremendous increase in traffic flow numbers over the years and an aging existing structure which opened in 1955. The fundamental question is whether our current Governor, unlike his predecessors, has the leadership, vision and determination necessary to build a brand new cross sound bridge from Oyster Bay to Rye. Such a bridge, once completed, would be of tremendous benefit to Long Islanders, generate dramatic commercial economic growth for the region and serve as a tribute to the legacy of Andrew Cuomo as Governor of the State of New York.

Long Islanders have waited sixty years for a real leader to come forth and build the bridge from Oyster Bay to Rye. Do we finally have one in Andrew Cuomo or just one more Governor to add to the long list of New York Chief Executives who exhibited benign neglect to the long wasteful road trip to a bridge too far.