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Editorial: Help Long Island jumpstart carpooling

By Long Island Press

"Adding highway lanes to deal with traffic congestion is like loosening your belt to cure obesity," the late influential architecture critic Lewis Mumford once famously wrote. On Long Island, plans recently surfaced to do just that in Suffolk County on Sunrise Highway, with similar plans previously bandied about and stalled in Nassau County. Addressing the persistent issue of traffic congestion across the region should also include reducing the number of cars on the road, not just making wider roads for more vehicles to clog but LI's mass-transit system does not always make that easy. The recent 14th annual Car Free Day LI has helped spotlight this issue during a special event at Farmingdale State College on Tuesday, Sept. 22, when transit agencies and regional mobility partners revealed new data detailing the region's changing mobility needs. Especially as back-to-school season traffic once again clogs out local roadways. As Schneps Media Long Island reported, the event was the local version of an international Car Free Day celebration every September held in more than 3,100 cities in over 50 countries around the world, encouraging people to drive less and get around through transit, bicycling, walking and vanpooling, while also promoting working from home if possible. The goal is to give drivers the opportunity to reflect on the negative impact of single-occupancy vehicles and to use alternative modes of transportation that help reduce traffic and harmful emissions, conserve energy and lessen parking problems something that the data shows is sorely needed. Long Island Rail Road ridership reached 7.9 million in June, including a record 5 million rides beyond the traditional commute, and is up nearly 5% year-to-date. Suffolk County Transit ridership has grown over 40% following its system redesign, while Nassau County's NICE Bus is seeing increased weekend travel. And according to regional officials, the changing way Long Islanders move has implications for affordability, independence, quality of life and the environment. The annual Car Free Day Long Island celebration is also the centerpiece of Long Island Mobility Week, which began on Sept. 15. The good news is that this year, Car Free Day Long Island concluded its campaign with a record-breaking 5,352 pledges a more than 50% increase over last year, representing an estimated 99 tons of CO₂ emissions avoided. This year's pledge drive includes 1,812 pledges to carpool, ride mass transit or use alternative modes, or transportation from commuters at Northwell Health, 1,309 pledges from Stony Brook University, 266 pledges from Adelphi University, 116 pledges from Farmingdale State College, 41 pledges from the Town of North Hempstead and 54 pledges from IMEG. We at Schneps Media Long Island are also trying to do our part by carpooling to the newsroom to take more vehicles off the road. We encourage our readers to join us in the effort.

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