



## VIEWPOINT

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# We need a plan to spend \$500M

With regional advocates such as Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos successfully directing at least \$500 million in state funds for Long Island infrastructure projects, the challenge is now leveraging those dollars to fund "transformative" projects and then to manage those assignments from blueprints to ribbon-cutting in the most efficient means possible. The task won't be easy.

Unfortunately, the challenge is more complicated than it should be because there does not currently exist a Long Island regional plan in which job sites are identified, blueprints drawn with bidding documents ready for review and distribution forwarded to the construction industry. Clearly there are needs for the state funds, but over the years there was no instruction ever given with regard to drafting plans that could be quickly retrieved when the necessary funds were, indeed, found.

The challenge isn't where to look for these projects. It's relatively easy to identify the strategic infrastructure opportunities. The importance of strengthening our road network was underscored during a recent poll commissioned by the Long Island Contractors' Association, which showed that 84 percent of the respondents believe good roads are essential to job growth and strong property values. It's not only smart public policy. It's smart politics because the LICA poll found that 65 percent of the respondents would consider voting against an elected official who intentionally doesn't repair roads.

The application process takes time. There needs to be a bicounty, bipartisan advisory task force that prevents that kind of delay and potential loss of focus by reviewing which projects will bring the best possible rate of return for the region's economy and the strategic protection of its future. The Long Island Association's Kevin Law, Desmond Ryan of the Association for a Better Long Island and the Long Island Planning Council's John Cameron would be excellent arbiters in providing nonbinding direction. Failure to do so will mean the hard-won allocation of dollars for Long Island's infrastructure could turn a hard-fought political win into a hollow victory filled with potholes.

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