



Sustainable transportation: Unclogging Long Island's roadways

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By Rosemary Mascali, LEED GA

The mere mention of attempting to unclog Long Island's roadways illicit chuckles because of resigned indignation that traffic problems on Long Island are too prevalent and will never be alleviated. Earlier this month, the Long Island Chapter of the U.S. Green Building Council hosted a panel discussion on Sustainable Transportation. Some may ask why the U.S. Green Building Council is taking a leadership position in transportation initiatives. The answer is in the slogan of the Long Island Chapter of the U.S. Green Building Council: "It's not about buildings...it's about people." In the Hauppauge Industrial Park, for example, more energy is consumed by commuters driving to and from the park than the energy needed for the buildings' operations. In fact, 28% of total energy consumed in the U.S. is for transportation, and it is also a major contributor to air pollution and greenhouse gases as 27% of U.S. greenhouse gases are from transportation. The soon to be released LEED V4 rating system recognizes the significance of transportation and has related up to 15 points towards more sustainable solutions.

Some people think being sustainable is synonymous with being green. However, there is a key difference between sustainability and the green movement. Sustainability is a system of best practices that protect the environment while at the same time fostering economic opportunity and quality of life. Through these "triple bottom line" best practices we can meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Transportation has many impacts on the three pillars of sustainability. The economic impacts include traffic congestion, the cost of transportation and the depletion of non-renewable energy supplies. The environmental impacts include global climate change, air pollution, consumption of land and urban sprawl. Social impacts include human health impacts, mobility barriers/inequalities for the disadvantaged, and inequalities associated with negative environmental and health impacts.

The Long Island Chapter of the U.S. Green Building Council will seek to address these and other transportation issues through a new sustainable transportation committee. The mission of this new committee will be to educate the public on the impact of transportation on the environment and best practices for sustainable transportation including workplace travel plans that incorporate effective transportation demand management and parking management strategies. Through seminars and advocacy, we hope to transform the way transportation is viewed by buildings and communities on Long Island in order to improve our air quality, reduce greenhouse emissions and finally, unclog our roadways.

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