

Bellone won't veto projects for Route 347 proponents

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Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone will not vote down a plan to fund several transportation projects throughout the region, despite calls for him to do so to push for more money for a critical road project in the county, Bellone's office said this week.

The announcement Tuesday followed calls from the Long Island Contractors Association, or LICA, a construction worker lobbying group, urging Bellone, a voting member of the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council, to veto several planned amendments to the agency's \$35 billion Transportation Improvement Plan. The plan, known as TIP, selects which regional transportation projects will be submitted for federal grant funding.

In a letter last month to Bellone, LICA executive director

Mark Herbst urged the county executive to use his veto power to ensure the stalled effort to rebuild Route 347 in Suffolk is added to the plan.

Bellone joined Herbst and other elected officials at a February rally calling for additional state funding for the Route 347 project. It aims to reconstruct 15 miles of roadway stretching through Islip, Smithtown and Brookhaven and used daily by 70,000 motorists. Funding for the project, which began in 2010, ran out last year after fewer than five miles of the roadway had been rebuilt.

Project proponents hoped as much as \$60 million would be included in the new state budget, but got just \$15 million. That was enough to begin design work on the effort's next phase, but not to resume construction work. Without a kick-start, Herbst estimated the construction wouldn't pick up any earlier than 2023, and

may not be finished until 2034.

Herbst, in his letter from the construction workers lobbying group, called the allotted state funding "stunning."

"Now, given Albany's sorry legacy on this issue, it is time to amplify your call to action," Herbst wrote to Bellone.

But Suffolk officials on Tuesday rejected Herbst's request, saying they did not believe voting down a slate of transportation projects in the TIP amendments, including the Long Island Rail Road's proposed construction of a third track on its Main Line in Nassau, was the way to go.

"Similar to our discussions with the state legislature and governor's office during budget negotiations, we will continue to advocate for more funding for improvements to Route 347," Bellone spokesman Jason Elan said.

Herbst, who met with officials from Bellone's office Tues-

day, said he remained optimistic that Bellone would continue advocating for the project. "I guess you could say he wants to catch flies with honey, rather than vinegar," Herbst said.

Herbst said the \$15 million allotted by the state for the project wouldn't mean much to drivers "sitting in traffic on a daily basis."

But state Department of Transportation spokesman Joe Morrissey said the funds would "lay the groundwork for future phases," including through preliminary engineering work.

"The New York State Department of Transportation understands and appreciates the vital link that the Route 347 corridor provides in serving the north/central portion of Suffolk County," he said. "DOT has fulfilled the Route 347 corridor commitments laid out in the current five-year capital plan, which amounts to more than \$160 million in work done to date."

Teen fatally stabbed outside New Cassel party

BY CHAU LAM
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A Uniondale teenager was fatally stabbed Thursday and a second was injured during a fight that erupted outside a New Cassel house party that police said drew about 100 people.

Jordan Harris, 16, was stabbed "multiple times," police said, and was taken to Nassau University Medical Center in East Meadow, where he was pronounced dead.

Police have not released the name of the second teen, 19, but said he was in stable condition.

"This was not a random act. This was a targeted event," Nassau police Det. Lt. Stephen Fitzpatrick, commander of the Homicide Squad, said during a news conference at the scene. "We're still looking for help."

Harris' mother cried as she hugged friends and family who stopped by Thursday afternoon to offer their comfort. Her family said she was too distraught to speak with a reporter.

Police were summoned to the corner of Costar Street and Roman Avenue, where officers



Police investigate Thursday's fatal stabbing of a 16-year-old near Roman Avenue and Costar Street.

found Harris with "serious injuries" shortly after 1 a.m. Thursday, Fitzpatrick said.

The party, which Fitzpatrick said was advertised on Instagram, drew people from three neighborhoods in Nassau. "They are all followers of each other on social media, so that's how word of mouth got around," he said.

When Harris and a group of

friends arrived, other partygoers in the house came outside and words were exchanged, Fitzpatrick said. The argument escalated into a fist fight, Fitzpatrick said. Several shots were fired from a handgun; then Harris was stabbed.

Police have not recovered the weapon used to stab Harris, Fitzpatrick said.

Merritt Benson, 19, who lives

half a block from where the fight broke out, said he saw a person stumbling on after the brawl. "He was holding his chest like he was in pain," he said. "By the time he got to Costar, he fell again and that's when the ambulance came."

Police asked anyone with information to call Nassau County Crime Stoppers at 800-244-8477.



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two-day trip to Texas.

Few wanted to talk about their journey, "but when you spoke about what is in front of you, when you spoke about the hopes and the dreams... people would sort of light up," he said.

One 12-year-old girl, sitting near her father, asked Brennan about snow because she had never seen it. When she said she was going to Philadelphia, Brennan told her in Spanish, "Vas a ver nieve" — "You are going to see snow."

Brennan said he also found some complexity on the trip. Border Patrol agents were not the coldhearted enforcers some envision, he said.

"They're all largely parents, and they have those parental instincts," he said. "Their hearts go out."