



Five Town Rural Transit, Inc.
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Southampton, NY -- July 28, 2005

Survey Finds Strong Support for New Transit Proposal On Long Island's East End

Residents of Long Island's five East End towns overwhelmingly support a proposed new public transit system for their region, according to telephone survey and focus group results released today by Five Town Rural Transit, Inc. (5TRT), the organization developing the plan. More specifically, people will use the new system five times as much as they currently use the existing one, based on the responses of 1,200 households in the telephone survey, which was conducted in June by Appel Research, LLC, an independent research firm near Albany, N.Y.

Only 4% of respondents said they use the current system (Suffolk County Transit, the Long Island Rail Road, or long distance buses – Sunrise Coach, Hampton Jitney, or Hampton Luxury Liner) at least two times per week, while 22% would use the new system that frequently (7% would use it 4-5 times per week and an additional 15% would use it 2-3 times per week).

Steve Appel, President of Appel Research, noted this broad-based approval was consistent among the many subcategories in the survey – geographic area (each of the five towns), age, income, etc. He observed the level and depth of the overwhelming appeal was unusually high for these types of surveys. “When you offer something brand-new, people tend to take a wait-and-see attitude, but not about this, not here, and not now.”

Hank de Cillia, 5TRT Executive Director, remarked, “The survey confirms our instinctive belief that East End residents want a public transit system designed for their needs.”

The proposed system, as described in the survey questions, would consist of new shuttle train service along the LIRR tracks, replacing the existing Long Island Rail Road service on the East End. Kathy Cunningham Faraone, 5TRT President, noted the main concept consists of “rail shuttles, running between hamlets at thirty-minute intervals, which are met by bus shuttles at the stations to take passengers to final destinations, or nearby.”

This coordination of service was extremely popular among those questioned, viewed “most favorably” by 70% of the respondents. Other features – additional parking, reopened train stations, new bus routes, and enhanced bus stops -- received similar support. But, even more popular were extending morning and evening hours of service and adding Sunday service, and maintaining the current low fare charged by Suffolk County Transit.

Following an explanation of how the system’s operating expenses would be financed, the surveyors also posed the possibility that the proposed transit system might have no fares at all, that it would be entirely free. The portion of the population who said they would use the system at least two times per week under those circumstances jumped from 22% to 30%. “Free is good!” replied one focus group respondent.

The explanation included the information that residents of the five East End towns now pay more than \$60 million per year in taxes and surcharges to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), largely from sales and mortgage taxes. In return, they receive very little LIRR service. The new system, which would replace and add to that service, is estimated to cost \$20 - \$30 million per year in operating expenses – less than one-half of what the MTA now receives.

The telephone survey was conducted in mid-June, 2005 in a central telephone bank, using trained interviewers entering results directly into a master computer, with 100% verification by experienced supervisors. The results of a randomly selected sample of 1,200 interviews, averaging 16 minutes each, are accurate to $\pm 3\%$, with a 95% confidence level. The margin of error for most subcategories was $\pm 6\%$.

Hal Ross, 5TRT Vice-President and Director of Research, stated that the results of the survey were one of the major foundations in deriving a forecast of demand for the proposed service. He said, “This demand forecast will be incorporated as part of our East End Transit (EETran) Development Proposal, to be presented to the East End Supervisors and Mayors Association (EESMA) at its early-fall meeting.”

Five focus groups were conducted in late April, 2005, each directed toward a specific population group: 1) commuters to jobs on the East End, 2) year-round resident non-commuters, 3) large employers on the East End, 4) 2nd homeowners, and 5) Spanish-speaking individuals. The first four focus groups were moderated by Mr. Appel. Francesca Moscatelli, a similarly-qualified researcher, moderated the last group, in Spanish.

After the new proposal was described, respondents in each of the five focus groups expressed their support. Typical comments included, “When does it start. We’re ready,” and “The interesting thing about this focus group ...is that there is no negativity toward the plan. Everybody wishes your group well and encourages them to move forward.”

Large employers, representing almost 4,000 employees who work on the East End, described transportation as one of their most significant challenges. They report great difficulty in hiring and retaining employees, paying premium salaries in return for long commutes, and tired and harried workers. When asked about the new transit proposal, all actively supported it.

Common to participants in all the focus groups was their desire to participate in the effort to move the plan forward. Recognizing that there would be obstacles to enacting this proposal, discussions focused on two major concerns, 1) having the Metropolitan Transportation Authority agree to transfer its right-of-way and services to a new public authority that would be created to run the system, 2) the difficulty in convincing people to switch from cars to public transportation. Still, it was noted that if only a small portion of people switched from their cars, there would be a major reduction of traffic congestion.

Fred Thiele, New York State Assemblyman and an adviser to 5TRT, was enthusiastic about the quality and comprehensiveness of the survey, including the five focus groups. He stated, “I have never seen such a well-thought-out survey of the transit needs of the people on the East End. Hopefully, these results will play a major role in securing the approval by the state legislature of my bill, coauthored with State Senator LaValle, for establishing a Peconic Bay Regional Transportation Authority (PBRTA).”

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Fact Sheet

Purpose of Organization:

Five Town Rural Transit, Inc., (5TRT) is a not-for-profit corporation, structured to research and develop improved public transit on Long Island's East End. 5TRT was organized to develop a comprehensive plan to create a new public transit system that would be sufficiently functional and attractive enough to move people from the roads onto buses and trains. This is a critical necessity because of the current gridlock resulting from traffic congestion, with its resulting negative impact on the quality of life of the East End's residents and visitors. In addition, it would serve the specific needs of commuters, employers, and those who are dependent on public transit.

Membership:

Five Town Rural Transit, Inc. is comprised of a board of directors and related affiliates, as shown on the attached sheet. There are two or more directors from each of the five towns, with the exception of Shelter Island, which has one director. Most of these individuals have played significant roles in several of the different transportation initiatives, including SEEDS (Sustainable East End Development Strategies), the Southampton Highway Task Force, and the Transportation Commissions that exist in Southold and Southampton.

History:

The organization began in early 2004, founded by Hank de Cillia and Hal Ross. Its main function was derived from a December 2003 article written for the Southampton Press by Mr. de Cillia, which outlined the coordinated bus and rail shuttle system that 5TRT is now developing. Five Town Rural Transit, Inc., has expanded to include other individuals who agree with the goals and the means to achieve them and desire to participate in the effort to carry them forward.

Primary Activities:

- Initial Conceptual Design of East End Transit (EETran) System (Complete)
- Surveys of East End Individuals, Focus Groups of individuals, commuters, and large employers (Complete)
- Development of Detailed EETran Proposal, including demand forecast (In progress)
- EETran Feasibility Study (To be contracted to an outside recognized authority)
- Public Referendum (November, 2006)
- Hand-Off to new regional transit authority (Ultimate goal)



Five Town Rural Transit (5TRT), Inc.

Kathleen Cunningham Faraone, President (East Hampton Town Resident, SEEDS Stakeholder)

Hal Ross, Vice President (Southampton Town Resident, Southampton Transportation Commission Member, SEEDS Stakeholder)

Pat Shillingburg, Treasurer (Shelter Island Town Resident, Town Zoning Board Member, SEEDS Stakeholder)

Margaret Brown, Secretary (Southold Town Resident, Southold Transportation Commission Member)

Hank de Cillia, Executive Director (Southampton Town Resident, SEEDS Stakeholder)

Joey Mac Lellan, Board Member (Riverhead Town Resident, Former Executive Director of Peconic Connections)

Tom Neely, Board Member (Sag Harbor Village Resident, Southampton Town Director of Public Transportation & Traffic Safety)

John Rooney, Board Member (Southold Town, North Fork Environmental Council Board Member, SEEDS Stakeholder)

Tom Ruhle, Board Member (East Hampton Town Resident, East Hampton Town Housing & Community Development Director, SEEDS Stakeholder)

Vince Taldone, Board Member (Riverhead Town Resident, Suffolk County Transportation Advisory Board Member)

Legislative Liaison

Fred Thiele (New York State Assembly)

Legal Counsel

J. Edward Shillingburg, Esq.

Environmental Advisers

Bob De Luca & Charlie Capp, Group for the South Fork

Dr. Scott Carlin, Southampton College & Institute for Sustainable Development

Maritime Adviser

Tom Fox, Principal, Southold Maritime Services Corp.

Statistical Adviser

Professor Liz Granitz, Southampton College

APPEL RESEARCH, LLC

MARKETING/PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH

Fact Sheet

Who We Are:

APPEL RESEARCH, LLC is a consultancy providing custom-designed opinion-based and demographic research. Using an arsenal of investigative marketing research tools, the firm:

- Goes beyond casual findings to identify powerful implications and develop actionable recommendations.
- Offers big picture thinking (how the client relates to the bigger surroundings) with clarity on key issues and attention to detail.
- Focuses on objectives and results, rather than on techniques.

What We Do:

APPEL RESEARCH, LLC performs public opinion studies for governmental agencies and private associations; market analyses for business; internet web site design and usability testing; and dial groups for moment-to-moment and trade-off decision-making analysis. Such techniques as focus groups, telephone surveys, and other types of quantitative studies are conducted and analyzed, from which strategies are drawn.

A Sampling of Clients:

Numerous qualitative and quantitative studies have been performed for Collegiate Marketing Service; Excelsior College; Frito-Lay; Interfaith Medical Center; International Center of New York; the Liberty (NY) Chamber of Commerce; the Marketing Research Association; the New York City Police Department; the New York State Department of Health; the Pharmacists' Society (NY); Proctors Theatre; Pros & Cons Software; the San Francisco Bar Association; Tilapias School District (CA); WAMC Public Radio; and public opinion surveys on the East End conducted over three decades.

Principal:

Steve Appel has led APPEL RESEARCH, LLC since 1978. Mr. Appel has conducted hundreds of studies of various types, involving hundreds of thousands of respondents. He is particularly skilled at coordinating quantitative and qualitative research. In addition to his private sector experience, he was Research Director in both houses of the New York State Legislature. Mr. Appel holds his undergraduate degree from the City University of New York, and his MBA from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. He is also an author of marketing research articles and has presented studies for the Qualitative Research Consultants Association and the Marketing Research Association, in his field.

“Insights you can use -- Accuracy you can count on”