

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2026

OPINION/COMMENTARY/GUEST ESSAYS

These roads need reliable funding



Crews repair a pothole on the northbound Wantagh Parkway in Wantagh in March. Credit: Newsday/Howard Schnapp

By Bruce Barkevich
Guest essay
October 2, 2026 2:00am

Long Islanders depend on their roads and bridges every day — to get to work, bring kids to school, connect communities and keep the region's economy moving.

Nowhere in New York is the importance of that infrastructure more apparent than in Nassau and Suffolk counties. Long Island has more than 25,000 lane miles of roads, and Suffolk County has more lane miles than any other county in the state. The Island is also home to about 690 bridges representing more than 7.3 million square feet of bridge deck.

Unfortunately, the condition of that infrastructure is not keeping pace with the demands placed on it.

Long Island's millions of drivers experience those deteriorating conditions firsthand. According to a 2022 report from the state comptroller, 53.5% of Nassau County's local federal-aid roads were rated in fair or poor condition, as were 44.1% of Suffolk's. Our bridges do not fare much better: 237 of them on Long Island are rated fair or poor, New York State Department of Transportation data shows.

Those conditions carry a very real cost for families and businesses. In 2025, TRIP, a national transportation research organization, estimated that metro New York drivers lose about \$3,755 annually because of vehicle operating costs from rough roads, congestion-related delays and wasted fuel, and the costs associated with traffic crashes.

Newsday's "Dangerous Roads" series documented the human costs of those crashes. [Suffolk County led the state with 118 traffic deaths in 2024](#), which was a significant improvement over the 155 people killed in 2023. TRIP notes three major factors are associated with fatal vehicle crashes: driver behavior, vehicle characteristics and roadway features.

Making these highway safety improvements and bringing Long Island's transportation infrastructure into a state of good repair will require billions of dollars and a sustained commitment from every level of government. That makes what happens in Washington this fall especially important.

The current federal surface transportation authorization expires on Dec. 11. Federal transportation programs provide New York with billions for highway and bridge improvements and, just as importantly, give state and local governments the long-term certainty they need to plan, fund and deliver major infrastructure projects.

Allowing that certainty to disappear would be a serious setback for Long Island. Highway departments cannot effectively plan multiyear reconstruction projects, replace aging bridges or responsibly manage capital programs when the future of federal transportation funding remains uncertain.

New York's congressional delegation should therefore make passage of the BUILD America 250 Act a priority before Dec. 11. The bipartisan, five-year reauthorization legislation would maintain strong federal investment in roads and bridges, increase bridge funding, improve project delivery, and provide states and local governments greater flexibility to address their most pressing infrastructure needs.

Long Islanders already pay the price for deteriorating roads and bridges through repairs to their cars, lost time, traffic and higher transportation costs. They should not also have to pay the price for uncertainty in Washington.

Congress can give communities the resources and predictability they need to rebuild and maintain the infrastructure their residents and economies depend upon.

For Long Island, the need is clear — and the time to act is now.

This guest essay reflects the views of Bruce Barkevich, the New York Construction Materials Association's president and CEO