



OFFICE OF THE SUPERVISOR

Town Hall
P.O. Box 970
38 North Ferry Road
Shelter Island, NY 11964-0970

Gerard F. Siller
Supervisor

Phone (631) 749-0015
Fax (631) 749-0728
gsiller@shelterislandtown.us

June 24, 2020

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
U.S. Senate
322 Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Schumer:

COVID-19 has taken a toll on many lives and businesses globally. The negative effects of the virus have also been felt across our country, New York State and Suffolk County. The Town of Shelter Island is dealing with the same issues faced by many, with an additional burden – the need for continuous ferry service between the island and the twin forks.

Practically speaking, Shelter Island is only accessible by ferry. The North and South Ferries, privately-owned and independent companies, play a vital role in keeping Shelter Island connected. These ferries are an essential component of a multi-modal transportation system that weaves together the Long Island Railroad, Hampton Jitney, Cross Sound Ferry, as well as vehicular and pedestrian traffic traversing Shelter Island via NY 114.

Not only do the ferries provide access for everyday traffic, but they also provide passage for emergencies. Both ferry companies are part of the Town of Shelter Island Hazard Mitigation Plan. As essential service providers, the ferry companies have been working throughout the pandemic to provide uninterrupted transportation to residents, healthcare workers, and other front-line workers.

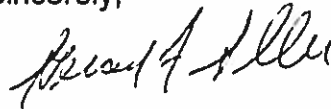
Due to restrictions on travel and the shuttering of certain businesses, traffic volume has been drastically diminished. The commercial traffic and "cash" fares from day trippers that fund our business and subsidize our resident discount tickets have evaporated. Both ferry companies have been fortunate to participate in the Paycheck Protection Program, which has helped to keep both companies operational. However, that funding will be exhausted in short order, and these private companies, which service the public good, will be in the precarious situation of struggling to continue providing service.

The financial damage experienced thus far and the expected reduction in seasonal revenues going forward are completely unsustainable. I consider the service provided by the North and South Ferries to be critical to the viability of Shelter Island's safety and local economy, as well as that of the entire east end. The ferries are no different in my mind to the MTA and the vital role that transportation provider plays in a variety of regions. As two separate and private companies, if traffic volumes do not rebound quickly, the ferries will not be able to survive and may be forced to first reduce service and may ultimately be compelled to cease services.

I implore you to consider the North and South Ferry Companies for Federal, New York State or local funding to keep public transportation viable. Both companies also pay a metropolitan commuter transportation mobility tax (MCTMT) annually totaling approximately \$50,000 in aggregate. Deferring or forgiving these funds would also be appreciated.

I am available for discussion on this topic and can coordinate a call with the two ferry companies to provide more details.

Sincerely,



Gerard F. Siller
Supervisor

cc: Senator Kirsten Gillibrand
Senator Kenneth P. LaValle
Congressman Lee M. Zeldin
Assemblyman Fred Thiele, Jr.
Suffolk County Legislator Bridget Fleming
Suffolk County Legislator Al Krupski