

Steve Stern
Legislator, 16th District
1842 East Jericho Turnpike
Huntington, NY 11743

August 19, 2015

The Honorable Andrew Cuomo
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

As Suffolk County Legislator for the 16th Legislative District, I am writing to express my strong opposition to the major construction project for a rest stop-Welcome Center facility on the eastbound Long Island Expressway (LIE) Service Road, between Exits 51 and 52. Quite frankly, this is a battle that I, other local elected officials and most importantly, community residents, had thought resolved. To suddenly be faced with bulldozers tearing down trees and signage for a Welcome Center for wineries 20 exits east of their homes, has residents alarmed and justifiably concerned about the impact this proposed facility will have on their quality of life.

This new facility, which would consist of a 9,000 square foot building and parking for more than 200 additional cars and buses, backs up to a residential community and is close to schools, churches, parks and recreational playing fields used by our children. This will have a negative impact on already poor air quality and our children's health and safety. Removal of trees and idling vehicles will raise noise levels, which are already unacceptably high and light from the center will intrude into residents' homes. There is no legitimate reason to impose these hardships on our community for a facility aimed at attractions more than 40 miles to the east.

Unlike Upstate New York, where exits on the Thruway are many miles apart and access to dining and fuel are limited, exits on the Long Island Expressway are close together and services are readily accessible. There simply is no need for a rest stop at this location.

The initiative to draw visitors to Long Island Wine Country and promote the "Taste of NY" program is well-intended and if properly placed, will have a beneficial impact on our local economy. The original plan was to place the Welcome Center in Yaphank, as part of improvements to the Suffolk County Farm, which is a natural gateway to the East End and makes sense from a geographic and tourism perspective. I urge you to work with the New York State Department of Transportation to construct this facility at a location that will both effectively promote the goals of attracting tourists and economic development and simultaneously protect the quality of life for Huntington residents.

I look forward to working with you to meet these shared goals.

Sincerely,

Steve Stern