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Press Release

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LIRR

IMMEDIATE

### South Fork Commuter Connection to Launch March 4

#### *New Environmentally Friendly Commuting Option Result of Years of Collaboration Between South Fork Officials and the Long Island Rail Road*

South Fork elected officials and community leaders today joined officials from the Long Island Rail Road to announce the March 4 start of a new system of LIRR trains interconnecting with shuttle services known as the South Fork Commuter Connection. The system is designed to provide a new commuting option on the South Fork, alleviate roadway congestion and stimulate the South Fork economy with an environmentally friendly transportation option.

Starting on Monday, March 4, the LIRR will add six trains per day east of Speonk, three one-way trips in the mornings and three in the afternoon. Select trains will connect with shuttles at East Hampton, Bridgehampton, Southampton, Amagansett and Montauk that will transport customers to and from selected employment centers and workplaces.

A joint fare covering trains and shuttles is set at \$4.25 one way. Tickets will be available at full-service ticket vending machines, where South Fork Commuter Connection ticket will be listed under "Deals & Getaways." Customers are encouraged to purchase a return trip ticket in advance.

Because the trains and connecting services are intended for those looking to travel within the South Fork, the trains will not connect with trains traveling to or from New York City, which makes them unique in the LIRR network.

The South Fork Commuter Connection is the culmination of many months of discussions between South Fork elected officials and community leaders and the railroad that has already resulted in a number of service improvements. In April 2017, the LIRR added an early-morning "Fisherman's Train" to the North Fork, and that November it expanded North Fork service with a new late-morning NYC-bound train. In May 2018 the LIRR doubled seasonal North Fork weekend service and extended a morning rush hour train to Southampton, Hampton Bays and Westhampton that was enabled by the LIRR's recent Montauk Branch signalization project.

Long Island Rail Road President Phil Eng said: "To anyone who's ever been stuck in traffic on the South Fork I say, give the train a try and see if it can solve your travel needs. The connecting shuttles will greatly extend the reach of this service, bringing you one step closer to door-to-door service. I thank everyone at every level of government and at the LIRR who has worked hard to make this a reality. This is a prime example that proves that a collaborative process can show real results."

Assemblyman Fred W. Thiele said: "The idea of a South Fork commuter service is something I have been working on since 1994, when I was a town supervisor. Over the years, there have been many attempts to execute this dream. In 1996, an East End Transportation Council was created to develop solutions to the growing transportation problems on the East End. In 2005, local municipalities signed a 'memorandum of understanding' to identify and improve traffic and transportation issues. It was the culmination of a four-year planning process known as Sustainable East End Development Strategies (SEEDS). Throughout, input was provided by the Five Town Rural Transit (5TRT), a local advocacy group formed to research the development of the 'East End Shuttle' and explore the issue of public transportation.

"Needless to say, it has been a long and winding road, and I am thrilled this idea has finally come to fruition. I thank the Long Island Rail Road for its commitment to establish the South Fork Commuter Connection and make this dream come true. I also thank East Hampton and Southampton Towns for their crucial participation in this project.

"The South Fork Commuter Connection will benefit the community in many ways, including reduced traffic congestion; a cleaner environment, by getting more cars off the road; and a bolstered local economy by making it easier for businesses to attract and retain employees. This is a first step towards improved public transit on the South Fork. I look forward to building ridership and working on infrastructural improvements to sustain a more frequent and convenient service in the future."

Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone said: "This new connection represents an important innovation to our South Fork public transportation network that will help thousands of residents make that critical last-mile connection to employment centers and busy downtowns without the need for a personal automobile. I applaud all of the community organizations, the LIRR and my colleagues at all levels of government for coming together to make this new system a reality."

Southampton Town Supervisor Jay Schneiderman said: "The South Fork Commuter Connection is the result of years of hard work by our State Representatives, Assemblyman Fred Thiele and Senator Ken LaValle. They fought for the funding needed to bring the trains to the South Fork and help the Towns of Southampton and East Hampton fund the last mile with connecting bus service. We know this alternative will give commuters a choice that will save time and make their commutes to work less stressful. Why spend an hour or more in traffic going from Hampton Bays to Southampton Village when the train ride is only 10 minutes?"

