



ECONOMIC ENGINE—Traffic on Route 110, shown from Pinelawn Road at the bottom to north of the Expressway, was light on this day but remains a major concern.

Rt. 110-LIRR Transit Study Funds Sought

By Peter C. Mastro Simone

Local officials are seeking a \$50,000 federal grant to study the feasibility of reopening the old Fairchild Republic railroad station just off Route 110 in East Farmingdale and making it the centerpiece of a regional transportation hub.

Babylon Supervisor Steve Bellone said he discussed the funding in a recent meeting with Representative Steve Israel (D-Bay Shore). Bellone is a member of the Route 110 Partnership, a nonprofit group comprising Babylon and Huntington officials and area business leaders. Israel was a member when he served on the Huntington Town Board.

"We need funding for an independent study that will look at the reopening of the station as an economic development project," Bellone said.

The congressman was receptive, he reported. The House of Representatives is just beginning to look at appropriations for member items such as the grant, and Israel will seek to get it passed, according to an aide, Jack Pratt. Pratt could not confirm if \$50,000 is the amount Israel is shooting for.

"I secured \$35 million for my district last year," he quoted the congressman as saying. "We are just starting the process again this year, and I am going to fight on

a bipartisan basis to secure funding for this and other worthy projects this year."

Anecdotal evidence, such as the crowds at surrounding train stations, demonstrates the Conklin Avenue depot would draw enough riders to make it worth reopening, Bellone said, but the Partnership wants hard numbers to back it up.

The group hopes to compliment the station with a multi-level parking garage, rerouted bus lines and a new shuttle service running up and down Route 110 to the Babylon and Huntington rail stops. The goal is to make the commercial corridor more amenable to high-technology industries by cutting down on traffic and pressing the modern emphasis on mass transit.

Long Island Rail Road President Ken Bauer acknowledged anticipating more riders if the station reopens in a recent letter to Sheldon Sackstein, chairman of the Action Long Island business group and a key proponent of the plan. Bauer also said the project would cost at least \$15 million.

Sackstein wants that figure broken down because he plans to secure millions of dollars from the business community, but only for certain elements such as parking, not state responsibilities such as trackwork.