Brookhaven Officials, Businesses Join to Oppose Proposed MTA Payroll Tax
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**BROOKHAVEN, NY** - Brookhaven Town Council members Timothy Mazzei, Jane Bonner and Keith Romaine today joined local business owners and school district officials in calling on New York State officials to oppose the proposed Payroll Tax the Metropolitan Transit Authority is requesting to be placed on local employers.

The MTA is facing a $1.2 billion deficit this year, and is proposing that taxpayers and small business owners bail them out by having the State Legislature implement a payroll tax, or what they are calling a mobility tax. The Mobility Tax, or "Job Tax" as some are calling it, would raise $1.5 billion a year through a 0.33 percent - 33 cents on every $100 - levy on payrolls in the MTA's 12-county service territory, which includes Suffolk County. The tax would apply to every payroll - villages, towns, counties, school districts, nonprofits and self-employed individuals, as well as conventional businesses.

"We can't solve this economic crisis by raising taxes. We should be working to promote and create jobs. Killing jobs by taxing already struggling businesses, particularly in this economy, is the wrong way to fund the MTA. We simply cannot afford to lose more local companies because of yet another burden of doing business in New York State," said Councilman Timothy Mazzei. "This tax could force local governments and school districts to raise property taxes or cut services. And with many Main Street businesses already at the breaking point, a new payroll tax will only add to their fiscal distress. We need to adopt job-creating policies, not job-killing policies.

At the press conference, Councilman Mazzei announced that he will sponsor a resolution at the March 10 Town Board meeting to have Brookhaven become the first municipality on Long Island to formally oppose this Job Tax, to protect downtown businesses, school districts and Town taxpayers. Mazzei pointed out that this new tax would cost Brookhaven Town approximately $200,000 every year.

This "Job Tax" would cost $330 on each $100,000 of payroll, which for a school district would mean $90,000 - more than the salary to hire a teacher with full benefits. The new tax would cost Suffolk school districts an estimated $12.8 million, which would be paid for by local taxpayers through school property taxes.

"The big government bureaucracy in New York State, with its liberal tax and spend mentality, is driving numerous businesses and families out of state," said Councilman Keith Romaine. "It is becoming impossible to afford the taxes and high cost of living on Long Island and this proposed "Job Tax" will just make the problems we face worse. It is a horrible idea. Let's help our Long Island workforce and their families, and not punish them for staying on Long Island."

In the first year, the tax would be used to cover the $1.2 billion shortfall in the MTA's 2009 operating budget of $11.4 billion and to reduce increases in fares and tolls for MTA riders. After 2009, it would be put in a "locked box" and applied exclusively to the capital budget.

"Over the past year, more than 21,000 jobs have disappeared on Long Island, with unemployment rising to nearly six percent. A new tax that could lead to more layoffs or local companies going out of business is the last thing we need," said Councilwoman Bonner. "Our schools, our taxpayers, our Main Street business and our local economy simply can't afford this new tax. It's a bad plan, being floated at the wrong time. The MTA needs to go back, sharpen their pencils and find ways to cut their spending and waste in their budget, increase accountability, and raise money from their own ridership before trying to burden our taxpayers and businesses to cover their financial failures."
Councilman Timothy Mazzei (center) and Councilwoman Jane Bonner are joined by Rocky Point business owners (l. to r.) Eddie Maher of Tilda's Bake Shop, David Clausen of the Clausen Agency; Tino Masotto of Cow Palace and Jeff Davis of Rocky Point Funeral Home in opposing the proposed MTA payroll tax during a press conference recently in Rocky Point.