

Good Morning, Long Island



THE FORECAST

Partly cloudy skies, hot and humid with highs in the 80s. A34

In Today's Paper



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Fare hike down road?

■ **Suffolk mulls bus price** increase as high as 50%

■ **Revenue could fund** added Sunday service

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Suffolk commuters soon may pay up to 50 percent more to ride a bus, as county officials are considering the first fare hike for Suffolk County Transit in nearly two decades, county officials said yesterday.

Revenue from the hike, which would raise the base fare from \$1.50 to as much as \$2.25, would be used to add Sunday bus service for the first time in the agency's 30-year history, officials said.

"It's not so much something we're doing to them, as much as we're doing it for them," said Legis. Jay Schneiderman (I-Montauk), who first proposed the fare hike in March. "It's important to understand that the riders of the bus have been begging for Sunday service and they have indicated a willingness to pay a little more for it."

The Sunday service is envisioned as part of a long-term plan to improve Suffolk County Transit. Later this month, the county is expected to release the full plan, which may include provisions for expanded routes, fine-tuned schedules and GPS-equipped buses.

The county held hearings on possible fare hikes in Hauppauge



Fares on county-owned Suffolk Transit buses could rise from the current \$1.50 to as much as \$2.25.

and Riverhead in June that were attended by fewer than 50 people total, county officials said.

If Suffolk County Transit's base fare rose to \$2.25, it would match the fare now paid by riders of Nassau's Long Island Bus, which is owned by the county but operated by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority. But in Nassau, recent fare increases were coupled with service cutbacks that included elimination of some bus routes.

Schneiderman said he believes a Suffolk Transit increase to \$2 is more realistic. He said the increases could be implemented as early as next month, but possibly would be rolled out later for seniors, students and the disabled.

Suffolk County Accessible Transit — the county's bus system for the disabled — could see

its fares increase from \$3 to as much as \$3.75 under the plan.

Suffolk's transportation director, Robert Shinnick, said Sunday bus service would cost about \$3 million. He said it wasn't clear whether a fare hike, alone, would generate enough added revenue to cover the cost, especially when an increase is bound to drive off some customers.

"I think riders understand that there could be a need for some increase, but I think if it goes a little too far, we're going to lose riders — definitely more than we should," said Shinnick.

Schneiderman said he believes the cost of adding Sunday service is closer to \$2 million, and that a 50-cent fare increase would more than cover the cost. Extra revenue would go to bus system improvements, he said.

LINE ON BUSES

Suffolk County Transit

Owner: Suffolk County
Operator: Suffolk County
Annual budget: About \$36M
Ridership: About 6 million
Current fare: \$1.50
Last fare hike: 1992, from \$1
Size of fleet: 160
Number of routes: 50

Long Island Bus

Owner: Nassau County
Operator: MTA
Annual budget: \$133 million
Ridership: 30.8 million
Current fare: \$2.25
Last fare hike: 2009, from \$2
Size of fleet: 305
Number of routes: 47

Sources: Suffolk County Transit, Long Island Bus

Crime boss, 93, guilty of racketeering

A Brooklyn federal court jury yesterday returned a racketeering conviction against John "Sonny" Franzese, the 93-year-old reputed underboss of the Colombo crime family.

Franzese, one of Long Island's most notorious gangsters in his heyday, was charged with involvement in loan-sharking and strip-club extortions in a trial that turned into a family drama with his son, ex-cocaine addict John Franzese Jr., wearing a wire and testifying against him.

After the verdict, Sonny Franzese — who has spent much of the past 50 years in prison — showed little emotion. When U.S. District Judge Brian Cogan immediately revoked his bail, he pushed himself up from the wheelchair he occupied for most of the trial and hobbled



John 'Sonny' Franzese,

off with marshals with the help of a cane after hugs and kisses on both cheeks from co-defendants and family.

"Obviously, it's devastating. This is a death sentence behind bars," said stepson Michael Franzese, a reformed mobster and Christian motivational speaker who condemned his brother John for betraying their father. "It's very bad, espe-

cially given the way it came down with my brother. It crushed my father."

Even the elder Franzese's estranged wife, Cristina Capobianco Franzese, who urged her husband to plead guilty and spare her son from testifying, was sympathetic to a nonagenarian with a pacemaker heading to prison.

"I feel that no 93-year-old man should be in jail," she said. "But if anybody can do it, Sonny can. Everybody loves him there. He's never had a problem. He can do that time standing on his head."

The three-week-long trial featured tapes on which Franzese, formerly of Roslyn, discussed how to fake threats from other crime families so that businesses would seek help from his Colombo crew, and at one point advised his son John on how to col-

lect debts: "[If] he don't give it to you, leave him on the floor."

Franzese faces up to 20 years when he is sentenced for racketeering, five counts of loan-sharking and two counts of extortion. Jurors found him guilty of extortion of the Hustler and Penthouse strip clubs in Manhattan, but found that prosecutors did not prove his involvement in a shakedown of the Cujini Due Pizzeria in Albertson.

Co-defendant Joseph DiGorga, 70, of Oceanside, a strip club operator, was convicted of racketeering, three counts of extortion and one count of loan-sharking. Christopher Curanovic, 29, was convicted of racketeering, robbery, use of a firearm, loan-sharking and extortion. John Capolino, 42, was convicted of loan-sharking. No sentencing date has been set.

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