

Suffolk sewer plan

■ **Pipe would be extended** to new Ronkonkoma Hub

■ **Officials say it will save money, help environment**

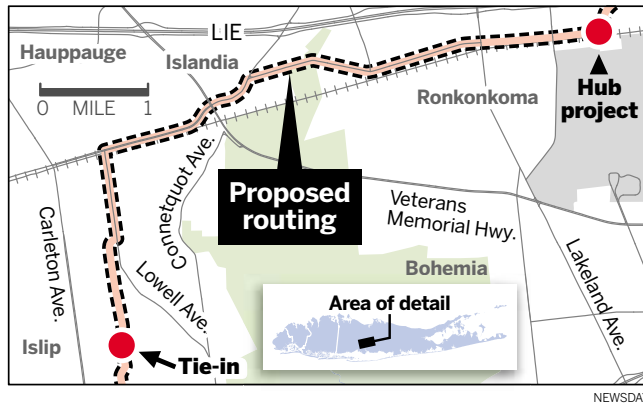
BY RICK BRAND

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Suffolk officials for the first time are looking to expand the reach of the mammoth Southwest Sewer District seven miles beyond its eastern edge to hook up to the planned \$475-million Ronkonkoma Hub project in Brookhaven.

“With the analysis we have now, it’s the best preference,” said County Executive Steve Bellone, who has made sewers a top priority. “The Ronkonkoma Hub is a critical project . . . and the Southwest Sewer District plant is a regional resource. In that sense, it is a perfect fit.”

Such a connection would scrap a proposed on-site \$25 million sewage treatment plant in



Ronkonkoma, where treated wastewater would be discharged into the groundwater. Instead, the county would build a pump station and run a pair of pipelines — costing \$20 million to \$22 million — from Ronkonkoma to the former Central Islip State Psychiatric Center, where it would tie into the sewer district. The sewage would be treated at the Bergen Point plant in West Babylon and treated waste-

water would be discharged three miles into the Atlantic Ocean.

Public works officials say a pipeline would save at least \$2 million to \$3 million in construction costs. It also would cut the 18- to 24-month construction time by six months while protecting the county underground drinking water supply, they say. The benefits “make it a no-brainer,” said Gil Anderson, public works commissioner.

The new pipeline also would permit connections along the route, spurring additional economic development. It also would eliminate the need to legally create a separate sewer district, which backers say could be time-consuming.

The 50-acre hub, dubbed by planners as a project of regional significance because of its nearness to the Ronkonkoma train station, is expected to have 1,450 apartments, up to 195,000 square feet of retail space and 360,000 square feet of office and medical facilities. “It gives us more certainty,” said Robert Coughlan, principal of TRITEC Real Estate Co. which is developing the Hub. “It also saves time and as you know, time can kill.” He said the firm expects to have its first 400 apartments open in 2016.

The plan for the new pipeline is similar to one that runs beyond the district border up Route 110 into Huntington where businesses, including the Canon corporate headquar-

ters and the Walt Whitman Shops, are connected and pay sewage fees by contract.

The Southwest Sewer District — by far the largest of Suffolk’s nearly two dozen sewer districts — serves more than 70,000 homes in Babylon and Islip from Amityville to Great River, south of Southern State Parkway. The \$640 million sewer district, once racked by scandal in 1970s, was the last county sewer plant built largely with federal funds. It has turned into a major regional asset that can handle 30 million gallons of sewage daily and is being enlarged to treat 10 million gallons a day more.

“It’s a solution that makes sense,” said Brookhaven Supervisor Edward P. Romaine. “People flush today and four days later it will make it to the sewer plant.”

Romaine also said a new pipeline could reach new areas in Islip not already sewered and go even further into Brookhaven. “We could have a spine of a sewer system for the future,” he said.

Co-pilot hijacks Italy-bound jet

BY GEIR MOULSON AND JOHN HEILPRIN
The Associated Press

GENEVA — It seemed like a routine overnight flight until the Ethiopian Airlines jetliner went into a dive and oxygen masks dropped from the ceiling. Only then did the terrified passengers, bound for Italy from Addis Ababa, realize something was terribly wrong.

The co-pilot had locked his captain out of the cockpit, commandeered the plane and headed for Geneva, where he used a rope to lower himself from a window and asked for political asylum. Authorities say a prison cell is more likely.

One passenger said the hijacker threatened to crash the plane if the pilot didn’t stop pounding on the locked door. Another said he was terrified “for hours” as the plane careened across the sky. “It seemed like it was falling from the sky,” Diego CarPELLI, 45,

of Italy said of the Boeing 767-300.

The jetliner carrying 200 passengers and crew took off from the Ethiopian capital on a flight to Milan and then Rome, but sent a distress message over Sudan that it had been hijacked, an Ethiopian official said. Once the plane was over Europe, two Italian fighter jets and later French jets were scrambled to accompany it. Italian Air Force Col. Girolamo Iadiciccio said the order to scramble came from NATO to ensure the plane didn’t harm national security and didn’t stray off route.

The plane landed in Geneva at about 6 a.m. No one was injured, officials said, and the hijacker surrendered to Swiss police.

“The pilot went to the toilet and [the co-pilot] locked himself in the cockpit,” Geneva airport chief executive Robert Deillon told reporters. He “wanted asy-



Passengers from hijacked Ethiopian jet are escorted off in Geneva. ■ Video: newsday.com/world

lum in Switzerland.”

It wasn’t clear why he chose Switzerland, where Swiss voters recently demanded curbs on immigration. Italy has a reputation among many Africans as not being hospitable to asylum seekers.

Ethiopian Airlines is owned

by the government, which has faced persistent criticism over its rights record and its alleged intolerance of political dissent.

The co-pilot was identified as Hailemedhin Abera, 31, an Ethiopian who had worked for the airline for five years and had no criminal record, said Ethiopian

Communications Minister Redwan Hussein, adding Ethiopia would seek his extradition. Geneva police said Abera claimed he felt threatened at home.

There have been at least eight hijackings by Ethiopians or involving Ethiopian planes in the last 25 years.