



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Adriano Espailat

After an Illusory Bridge Study, Senator Espailat Demands a Real One

ADRIANO ESPAILLAT December 12, 2013



When Adriano Espailat heard that the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey was using an apocryphal traffic study to justify the traffic-snarling closure of New Jersey access roads to the George Washington Bridge, like many people, he immediately concluded that it "had politics written all over it."

But Espailat, as a state senator from Washington Heights, had extra reason for annoyance.

While the New Jersey side of the Port Authority cited a traffic study as explanation for what appeared to be politically motivated lane closures, Espaillat had been asking the Port Authority to do a real traffic study for nearly a year.

"Now that they are redoing and revamping and developing the [George Washington Bridge bus] terminal, I've asked and the community has asked for the Port Authority to sponsor a traffic study," he told me on Friday.

After the George Washington Bridge enters Manhattan, it connects with the I-95 corridor. To avoid the inevitable gridlock, cars coming off the bridge routinely spill onto local streets and create traffic there, too.

At the same time, the authority is finally about to get started on a \$183 million renovation of the bus terminal at the base of the bridge, a renovation that not only will involve the temporary closure of some local streets, but will also bring 120,000 square feet of new retail space to the terminal and with it, possibly, more traffic.

Further complicating matters, the neighborhood is already home to one of the highest pedestrian-fatality rates in Manhattan.

On August 14, Espaillat sent a letter to Port executive director Pat Foye in which the senator reiterated the request he'd made for a traffic study last November.

"With construction soon to begin, I am concerned that in the intervening nine months, the Port Authority has made no progress whatsoever on evaluating how the construction will impact area traffic, which already is snarled and poorly managed," wrote Espaillat. "I am eager to hear what the Port Authority will be doing to honor its commitment to assess and mitigate the impact of this project on area traffic patterns, bus routes, etc."

The Port Authority did not respond to a request for comment.

"It's sort of laughable that in the middle of all this, they have suspiciously said that they closed down those lanes in Jersey because they've been doing a traffic study, yet when we ask for a legitimate traffic study on this side of the river, they haven't produced it," said Espallat.

-By Dana Rubinstein, Capital NY