



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Tony Avella

Senator Avella Urges City to Repair Rundown Pedestrian Tunnel

TONY AVELLA July 18, 2014



The tunnel, located underneath the Cross Island Parkway, has been in dire need of scraping, repainting, and cleaning

(BAYSIDE, NY) On Thursday, Senator Tony Avella was joined by civic leaders and area residents at a press conference to call for immediate repairs of a rundown pedestrian tunnel in Bellerose.

The tunnel, which is located directly between the St. Gregory's Church and School, is used by residents to cross the Cross Island Parkway (CIP) on a daily basis. Over the years, however, the tunnel has become an eyesore, with bird droppings, offensive graffiti, and peeling paint. The lighting inside the tunnel has been out of service for several months, which appears to have been caused by significant leaking problems from the overhead CIP.

After addressing this matter with the City, Senator Avella was informed that this location is currently pending with the “bridge painters,” a small unit within the Department of Transportation that is responsible for the upkeep of every single bridge and tunnel throughout the City of New York.

Senator Avella stated, “The issues inside this tunnel are self evident. It is clear that this tunnel is not being maintained and this past winter exacerbated the significant wear and tear. Yet this tunnel is used every day by residents of the nearby community who are unable to walk a half a mile around the Cross Island Parkway in order to get to the other side of Bellerose. Unfortunately, the City has responded stating that there is only one crew to service all the bridges and tunnel in the five boroughs. Well, we all know what that means – never ending wait. This is a very quiet residential neighborhood and the residents are entitled to the same resources as the ones given to major bridges and tunnels. A major job needs to be done here and it needs to be done now.”

Mr. Michael O’Keeffe, President of the nearby Creedmoor Civic Association stated, “This is a very frequently used tunnel. It is a major roadway used by people to get back and forth when they are taking the LIRR, attending St. Gregory’s Parish, and the St. Gregory’s school. When

St. Gregory’s Church and school were built, this highway did not exist. But since the Cross Island Parkway was built, children and senior citizens have to walk back and forth on a daily basis, which is all the more reason it needs to be properly repaired.”

Mr. Jerry Wind, President of the nearby Bellerose Hillside Civic Association added, “If you recall, a couple of years ago, a police officer was assaulted in this tunnel. It is important that the lighting and all the other issues be fixed. What has been happening is that the City puts band aids on things with a shoddy paint job, rather than properly address the issues.. This really has to stop. There has to be regular maintenance here.”

Ms. Angela Augugliaro, President of the surrounding Queens Colony Civic stated, “The police officer was assaulted here while trying to stop graffiti being sprayed on the walls, which makes that situation even worse. Our civic association has tried for years to paint over the graffiti by volunteering our time and buying paint out of our own pockets, despite this location being under the City’s jurisdiction. But the conditions have become much worse and we are unable to paint over the problems. We now call on the City to take over the responsibility and properly maintain this tunnel.”

Rev. William Dulaney, Parochial Vicar at the St. Gregory’s the Great Church, added, “As a representative of the Church, I see firsthand how many people use this tunnel. On Sunday mornings many people travel back and forth from mass. Quite often we bring the kids from the school for various activities. After school and on weekends, we have activities for the youth in our hall, so this passageway gets a lot of use. The safer it is, the better it would be. We hope something can be done soon so the residents can benefit.”