



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Tony Avella

## Release: Avella Calls on MTA to Reopen 3rd Avenue Exit on Whitestone Expressway

TONY AVELLA March 25, 2015

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(QUEENS, NY) Today, in a letter to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) State Senator Tony Avella criticized the agency for continuing to delay the opening of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue exit of the Whitestone Expressway.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue exit has been closed for more than two years, and despite multiple commitments to reopen the exit at various times in 2015, the MTA revealed this week that they expect the roadway to remain closed through the end of May.

The exit has been out of service since January 2013, when the MTA closed the ramp as contractors began a \$109 million project to widen the Queens approach to the northbound Whitestone Bridge. The closure of this exit, the last one in Queens before crossing the bridge and entering the Bronx, has led to severe congestion and traffic problems for the residential neighborhoods of Whitestone and College point.

Senator Avella has continued to monitor this construction and has been in constant contact with the MTA to obtain an updated estimate as to when the roadway will be reopened to the public. After conducting a survey last year of residents in the surrounding community, finding that the majority of them wanted the exit reopened, Senator Avella reached out to the MTA and was originally informed that the roadway would be opened by the end of January 2015.

However, the opening was delayed after the MTA decided to keep the exit closed while work is completed on the entrance to the Whitestone Bridge, stating it would be safer for construction crews to leave the barriers in place. Senator Avella stayed in close contact with the MTA throughout this extension and learned that the agency expected the exit to be fully accessible by May 8<sup>th</sup>, but just a few days later, the MTA pushed the date back further.

“The closure of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue exit has inconvenienced drivers for more than two years and has been the cause of significant traffic congestion, especially during rush hour. During this construction, both passenger vehicles and commercial tractor trailers have been rerouted through residential streets, creating traffic back-ups and increasing the danger to pedestrians. The residents of Whitestone and College Point have had enough. It is unacceptable that the MTA continues to delay the opening of this roadway while motorists, pedestrians and homeowners suffer the consequences. I urge to agency to set an end date for this construction and actually stick to it so that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue exit can finally be accessible again,” **said Senator Avella.**