



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Terrence Murphy

Murphy Rail Safety Bill Passes Senate, Same Day As Metro North Fire

TERRENCE MURPHY May 17, 2016

ALBANY, NY - A two alarm fire under Metro North tracks in Harlem today shut down service indefinitely with one northbound train stranded only five blocks from the fire. Senator Terrence Murphy, who earlier in the day passed his bill to install cameras at dangerous grade crossings, said more still needs to be done to ensure the safety of Metro North commuters.

Following the horrific accident in Valhalla last year, Senator Murphy introduced several measures to improve grade crossing safety. The grade crossing measure passed today, and while another relating to train safety briefing announcements made it out of committee last year, could have proved useful today.

"Considering how many people either utilize Metro North, or drive over the grade crossings, we must do everything we can to ensure our residents are safe," Senator Murphy said. "A good first step in that direction is to allow municipalities to install traffic cameras at these intersections and I am proud to say my colleagues in the Senate approved this measure earlier today."

Existing statute precludes municipalities from installing traffic cameras at grade crossings. Last year, Senator Murphy introduced Senate Bill S5238, which would authorize local authorities to establish and implement grade crossing monitoring systems by means of

photo devices.

This would not be a mandate, but instead provides municipalities with this safety option should they choose to install these systems, Murphy noted. The bill passed the Senate unanimously in 2015 and again today.

In addition, Murphy has also crafted legislation that would require Metro North to provide safety briefings to passengers, a bill which was reported unanimously through two Senate Committees. Elements of S4178-B have already been put into practice by agency rule thanks to pressure from Senator Murphy.

"It has been said that education is the best way to prevent tragedies at grade crossings," Murphy explained. "I believe that to be the case when it comes to tragedies in the unlikely event of an evacuation. This most recent incident involving Metro North commuters proves yet again the need for the proper dissemination of emergency protocols."

Since the bill made it to the Senate floor last year, it is possible it could come up for a vote this year before lawmakers return home in June.