



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Terrence Murphy

New bills get railway safety back on track

TERRENCE MURPHY December 4, 2016

| ISSUE: **MTA, GRADE CROSSING ELIMINATION ACT, RAILWAY SAFETY**



Valhalla, NY – Many local families lives were changed forever on February 3, 2015 when a Metro-North commuter train struck an SUV at a grade crossing near Valhalla, killing six people and injuring fifteen others. The crash was the deadliest in Metro-North’s history. Rail safety advocates, led by Senator Terrence Murphy, vowed to work toward passing comprehensive rail safety legislation. On December 1st at the site of the tragic accident, Senator Murphy, joined Senator David Carlucci and Assemblyman Tom Abinanti to announce the signing of two new rail safety bills into law.

“We are taking measures to establish joint inspections at railway crossings in order to make sure railways and signal lights are properly maintained and that there are increased penalties for drivers who violate the laws or railway safety,” said Senator Murphy. “This is a matter of taking the right steps to improve public safety.”

“There are over 5,300 railway crossings in New York. Unfortunately, our tendency in New York is react, rather than be proactive, and we are going to continue to see horrible accidents like the one at this location in 2015 until we have a proactive plan,” said Senator Carlucci.

“While the rest of the nation has seen a decrease in the number of fatalities, New York has seen an increase. This is why this legislation is so important. We need to adopt more comprehensive safety laws to help save lives.”

This past week, Governor Andrew Cuomo approved Senator Murphy’s omnibus bill increasing penalties for motorists who repeatedly drive through or around a gate or barrier at a railroad crossing. The bill also increases penalties for railroad companies who fail to report derailments. In addition it aligns State Law with the Federal Rail Safety Act of 2008, requiring railroad track owners to implement bridge safety programs, maintain an inventory of railroad bridges and to have the bridges inspected. The inspection reports must be submitted to the DOT within 30 days.

The rail safety bill, co-sponsored by Senator Murphy, authorizes the Department of Transportation to coordinate inspections of traffic control signals interconnected with railroad crossing systems. This important study will be used to determine which rail grade crossings require improved safety measures in order to prevent future collisions between vehicles and trains.

“Immediately after the tragic train accident in Valhalla that took the lives of three members of the New Castle community, I stated that we will never stop working to protect and

preserve the safety of our residents,” said New Castle Town Supervisor Rob Greenstein. “I was very happy to hear the Governor Cuomo signed into law a bill that will lead a review of all its at grade crossings, evaluating and prioritizing the most dangerous ones and exploring new safety measures. A bridge over the Roaring Brook Road grade crossing and the Saw Mill River Parkway would eliminate two dangerous conditions – an on-grade railroad crossing and a traffic light on a busy highway. This is especially important due to the proximity to our high school with young drivers and increased traffic expected from a new retail development. But, Federal funds would be needed. This Sunday is the one year anniversary of the FAST Act, a five-year, \$305 billion Federal highway bill. That was a good start. I hope President-Elect Trump’s would make good on his promise for a national infrastructure spending bill.”

Alan Brody, the husband of Ellen Brody, the driver of the SUV who died in the Metro North collision, gave an impassioned speech at the press conference backing the importance of the new bills while calling for additional safety measures. Since the crash, Mr. Brody has become a fervent advocate for increasing railway safety.