



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Terrence Murphy

Hudson Valley Lawmakers PROD DOT to release railway crossing safety study

TERRENCE MURPHY August 1, 2017

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Valhalla, NY - An assembled crowd of legislators, railway safety advocates, policeman and invited guests stood at the Commerce Street railway crossing in Valhalla as they recalled the grim details surrounding the deadliest commuter train crash in Metro-North's history. The accident occurred on February 3, 2015 when a Metro-North commuter train struck an SUV at the crossing, killing six people and injuring fifteen others.

In the wake of that tragic crash, Senator Terrence Murphy, Senator David Carlucci and

Assemblyman Thomas Abinanti united to create legislation directing the Department of Transportation (DOT) to conduct a statewide safety study of railway crossings.

The Senate bill (S3458B) sponsored by Senator Carlucci and co-sponsored by Senator Murphy, and a corresponding bill sponsored in the Assembly by Assemblyman Abinanti (A5235B) were signed by Governor Andrew Cuomo in November 2016. The legislation required the DOT to evaluate and report on the condition of highway-rail crossings in the State by April 1, 2017. The DOT missed the deadline. Despite repeated calls from legislators, the DOT has not given an update on the status of the study. In light of the recent findings by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) regarding the accident, the three legislators met at the crash site, urging the DOT to complete the safety study before another tragedy occurred.

"The NTSB's findings confirmed what we have known for decades - that the more than 5,300 railroad crossings under the DOT's jurisdiction need to be inspected and evaluated," said Senator Murphy. "We can take steps to ensure tragedies of this magnitude do not happen again. For the sake of commuters and their families, we are asking that the DOT step up and do the right thing - complete the safety study."

Senator Carlucci said, "The public is still at risk. While the rest of the nation has seen a decrease in the number of railway fatalities over the past ten years, New York has seen an increase. We have \$1.5 billion approved by the Federal government for railway safety improvements once the study is complete. These funds will keep costs for improvements from being passed on to taxpayers. We need the DOT to finish their report to be able to access the funds."

"We cannot wait for the next tragedy to happen in order to act," said Assemblyman Abinanti.

"Most of the railways passengers ride on were designed for rural America. They were laid down in the 1800's and have not been upgraded in 150 years. This important study can determine which rail crossings require improved safety features, the adequacy of traffic and warning signals to prevent future collisions. It is time for answers."

Alan Brody, the husband of Ellen Brody, the driver who died in the Metro-North crash and is now a fervent railway safety advocate, joined the legislators at the podium.