



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

David Carlucci

Carlucci & Abinanti Call on NYSDOT to Submit Rail Crossing Study & Reveal Improvements Should Have Been Made At Commerce Street Crossing Prior to Valhalla Train Crash

SENATOR DAVID CARLUCCI February 9, 2020

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Valhalla, NY – Senator David Carlucci (D-Rockland/Westchester), Assemblyman Tom Abinanti (D-Tarrytown), and Alan Brody held a press conference at the Commerce Street Crossing in Valhalla on Sunday to mark the 5-year anniversary of the deadliest Metro North train crash, and demand answers from the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT).

Despite multiple calls and letters to the NYSDOT, lawmakers said there has been no communication from the state agency on a rail grade crossing safety study that was required under the law to be produced by April 1, 2017. The study would serve as a comprehensive inventory of the State's 5,304 rail grade crossings, and the report will include the accessibility of federal funds for improvement projects and the viability of implementing changes to increase safety. To date, the NYSDOT has not submitted the report.

Senator David Carlucci said, "While bureaucrats sit idly, New Yorkers are being put at risk. We cannot be reactive to train accidents on Metro-North, NJ Transit, CSX, and Amtrak. We need to be proactive. The study was to be completed in 2017 so we could know which rail crossings are the deadliest, which need some improvements, and which should be closed."

Assemblyman Tom Abinanti said, "We are here to remember and demand action. Five years ago was the worst Metro North train accident at the Commerce Street Crossing in Valhalla, 4 years ago we passed legislation that was signed by the Governor to require a study of all grade crossings, 3 years ago that study was to be completed, and 3 weeks ago there was another rail accident in Sloatsburg. Still, there have been no changes. We need to know what we can do to ensure another accident like what happened in Valhalla doesn't happen again."

The study of the State's rail grade crossings was prompted by the deadliest Metro-North train accident in history on February 3, 2015. Alan's wife, Ellen Brody, was killed when her vehicle got stuck on the tracks. Five passengers on the train were also killed and 15 others were injured.

Alan Brody said, "What is clear is that the MTA and NYSDOT are not willing to take action. I think the cities and towns should be empowered to make their own changes. At the end of the day, the MTA and the NYSDOT are not concerned about our safety, but we are."

Lawmakers and Brody also took aim at the NYSDOT's response to safety ahead of the 2015 Metro-North crash, citing a 2005 NYSDOT grade crossing assessment of the Harlem, Hudson, and West Hudson lines, which had never previously been made public. In it, they claim it shows improvements were needed at the crossing since 2005, but they were never made.

"We believe as a result of the study about \$126,000 was allocated in 2009 to make safety improvements to the Commerce Street Crossing, including a second crossbuck and another sign on Commerce Street leading up to the crossing," said Brody.

"We do not know if one of those changes could have prevented the 2015 tragedy," said Abinanti.