

New York State Senator



New York State Senator



**Working Hard for
Long Island & New York State**

Media Contacts:

Christine Geed, Communications Specialist

geed@nysenate.gov or (631) 398-8044

Taylor Adamczyk, Press Secretary

adamczyk@nysenate.gov or (516) 567-5154

Jennifer Romero, Press Secretary

jromero@nysenate.gov or (631) 513-5657

PRESS RELEASE

Tuesday, February 23, 2016

For Immediate Release

NYS Senators Phil Boyle and Tom Croci Fight to Fix The Merge – Finally!

*Senators Push for \$30 Million for Improvement of Congested, Hazardous
'Oakdale Merge'*

Oakdale, NY – New York State Senators Phil Boyle and Tom Croci, who both represent parts of the south shore of Long Island in Suffolk County, announced they are attempting to allocate \$30 million to finally begin the process to address the decades-long traffic bottleneck known as the 'Oakdale Merge'.

The 'Oakdale Merge' is an area where two major state highways, NYS Route 27 (Sunrise Highway) and NYS Route 27-A (Montauk Highway), converge over the Connetquot River between East Islip and Oakdale. Through this portion of roadway, the usual five traffic lanes in each direction of Sunrise Highway are reduced to three lanes with additional traffic entering onto Sunrise Highway via the Hecksher State Parkway/Southern State Parkway interchange. These conditions cause a bottleneck of traffic flow in both directions leading to major delays for traffic traveling at high volume times during the morning and evening rush hour commutes.

"The 'Oakdale Merge' has been a problematic issue on Long Island for over a decade," said Senator Phil Boyle. "The merge is not only a traffic nightmare, but it has also been the scene of several deadly car accidents. As a first responder, I know how important it is to get to an emergency situation quickly. I could only imagine how daunting it must be for our fire and police departments to respond to an emergency on or around the merge. Lives have been lost, businesses have suffered and residents have had enough. There is no more time! We need our State legislators and the Governor to fund this project and fix the Oakdale Merge now!" Senator Boyle concluded.

"I am pleased to have the opportunity to partner with Senator Boyle on this significant project that aims to positively impact the hundreds of thousands of people affected by the 'Oakdale Merge' nightmare on a daily basis. It is important that any proposed engineering resolution must incorporate public input of nearby residents and businesses, and our goal is to once and for all provide a solution to alleviate the traffic congestion and dangers associated with this portion of roadway," stated Senator Croci.

Kevin Law, President & CEO of the Long Island Association also weighed in on the urgent need for action. "It is imperative that the state prioritize funding to fix the 'Oakdale Merge' which will improve road safety and traffic flow, promote economic development and result in new construction jobs, and thus the Long Island Association commends Senator Boyle and Senator Croci for their efforts to get this project implemented."

The 'Oakdale Merge' is impacted by several major motor vehicle accidents each year and, a few years ago was the site of a thirteen-car accident caused by a chain reaction accident at the merge. This funding aims to not only develop a plan to increase motorists' and nearby businesses' quality of life with better traffic flow, but to also increase public safety with decreased car accidents and better accessibility for first-responders to emergencies.

“The time for improvements is now, before another life is put in jeopardy,” said Don Corkery, Sayville Fire Commissioner and originator of “Fix the Merge” Community Action Committee. “As a first responder, I have seen many times when the merge congestion has actually been the reason why homes have been completely destroyed by fire or there has been loss of life because we just couldn’t get from point A to point B. Sometimes it takes over a half hour to respond to a call when emergency vehicles have to travel through the merge. That’s dangerous and we have to change it now!”

For over a dozen years, Bohemia resident and staunch community activist Elaine Faith Thompson has been fighting to improve the dysfunctional merge. Living just 700 feet from Sunrise Highway, Elaine has seen and heard it all. “I have been working on this project since 2004,” Elaine said. In 2012 I received correspondence from NYS DOT stating that, “potential improvements to the interchange were previously studied and dismissed due to significant environmental impacts and right-of-way issues”. Over 200,000 people travel through the merge every day. With the cars and the people come the ambulances and the red flashing lights. I’m tired of it! It is time we bring order to the Oakdale merge, it will save lives!”

The funding for this project will allow for a comprehensive study to evaluate engineering concerns while addressing broader traffic congestion problems. The money required for this project could be allocated out of a transformative investment fund designated to compensate the Island for receiving a comparatively slim share of a windfall from national banking settlements. The fund awarded to the Long Island region is designated for infrastructure projects focusing on economic development.

All media inquiries should be directed to the Senator’s Communications Specialist, Christine Geed at (631) 398-8044 (call or text) or via email at geed@nysenate.gov. Inquiries for additional information should be directed to Senator Croci’s Press Secretary, Jennifer Romero at (631) 513-5657 or via email at jromero@nysenate.gov or, Senator Boyle’s Press Secretary, Taylor Adamczyk, Press Secretary or (516) 567-5154 or via email adamczyk@nysenate.gov.

###