



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie Brings Together Amish, Local Leaders and Law Enforcement to Improve Highway Safety

Patty Ritchie

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Participants Agree to Find Better Safety Markings for Buggies

In an effort to help the North Country public and the region's Amish population more safely share the road, State Senator Patty Ritchie brought together St. Lawrence County Legislators, law enforcement and Amish leaders to explore different ways to improve markings on buggies and announced that by using a state grant she had secured, St. Lawrence County recently finished installing more than 100 new warning signs to alert motorists to buggies traveling on roadways.

"St. Lawrence County is home to the fastest growing Amish population in our state, and while they have different beliefs and customs, members of the Amish community have become a significant part of our community—living working and investing in our region," said Senator Ritchie.

"This isn't a case of Amish versus English. It's about our shared responsibility to keep our community safe, and that's what we achieved today; an agreement to work together to make our region—specifically, our highways—safer."

Held Thursday at the Heuvelton Volunteer Fire Department, the meeting—which included representatives of the 12 Amish church districts in St. Lawrence County led by Mose Miller, St. Lawrence County Sheriff Kevin Wells, St. Lawrence County Legislature Chair Joseph Lightfoot, County Legislators Travis Dann and Larry Denesha and Lt. Kevin Bouyea representing the New York State Police—was prompted by recent concerns raised about the safety of buggies traveling on local highways and challenges posed by the Amish population's inability to use bright orange safety triangles due to religious restrictions.

Currently, Amish use reflective tape or lanterns on their buggies to make them more visible. During the meeting, Senator Ritchie pointed out that newer tapes have the ability to increase visibility to 1,000 feet or more and have helped reduce nighttime crashes by more than 40 percent. As a result of Thursday's meeting, all participants agreed to explore options for making buggies more visible.

In addition to her signage initiative, Senator Ritchie has also partnered with St. Lawrence County Clerk Mary Lou Rupp, Sheriff Wells, the St. Lawrence County Traffic Safety Committee and St. Lawrence

County's four local colleges in recent years on a program to raise awareness of horse-drawn vehicles on local roads. So far, as a result of the educational initiative, more than 5,000 people over the last two years have received informational brochures with facts and tips for safely sharing the road with horse-drawn vehicles and Amish people walking local highways, especially Amish schoolchildren.

(State Senator Patty Ritchie is pictured in the above photo following Thursday's meeting alongside one of the warning signs obtained through a state grant she helped secure)