



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Terrence Murphy

Murphy, local officials, call for modern Grade Crossing Elimination Act

TERRENCE P. MURPHY July 27, 2015

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KATONAH, NY - Even eighty-seven years after passage of the Grade Crossing Elimination Act, rail safety remains atop the agenda of many local lawmakers. According to the Federal Railroad Administration Office of Safety Analysis, the grade crossing at the Katonah Train Station continues to be ranked as one of, if not the most, dangerous in the Hudson Valley.

Following the horrific accident in Valhalla this past February, Senator Terrence Murphy

introduced several measures to improve grade crossing safety. "After the tragedy in Valhalla I heard from a number of local elected officials about the need to improve safety at these dangerous intersections," he said.

"Considering how many people either utilize Metro North, or drive over the grade crossings, we must do everything we can to ensure our residents are safe," Senator Murphy said. "A good first step in that direction would be allowing municipalities to install traffic cameras at these intersections."

Existing statute precludes municipalities from installing traffic cameras at grade crossings. Earlier this year, Senator Murphy introduced S.5238, which would authorize local authorities to establish and implement grade crossing monitoring systems by means of photo devices. This would not be a mandate, but instead provides municipalities with this safety option should they choose to install these systems. The bill passed the Senate unanimously with 63 votes in June but did not come up for a vote in the Assembly.

New Castle Supervisor Rob Greenstein said, "Traffic cameras at railroad crossings will dramatically increase compliance and enforcement of our railroad crossing safety laws. This is why I encouraged Senator Murphy to introduce this legislation and I commend him for his leadership on this issue. We will continue to work tirelessly to secure federal funding for the construction of a bridge over the grade crossing on Roaring Brook Road and the Saw Mill River Parkway. The Roaring Brook Road grade crossing is unique because it is tied into a ramp interchange with the Saw Mill River Parkway and lies less than a half mile from the Horace Greeley High School in the Chappaqua Central School District. Westchester County Records indicate that 490 accidents have occurred at that interchange since 2006."

Mt. Pleasant Supervisor Carl Fulgenzi said, "I am grateful for Senator Murphy proposing this

legislation. Anything that can help create safer crossings, in lieu of closing them, we would greatly appreciate."

Francis Corcoran, a member of the Metro-North Railroad Commuter Council, a state board appointed by the Governor, said, "As a citizen, a former rider and member of the Metro-North Railroad Commuter Council, the efforts by Senator Murphy will help to increase the safety of the riders as well of those dangers crossings that impact our communities every day. We must make every effort possible at all levels to insure a repeat of the tragic events that have affected our communities and our families never happens again."

Murphy also crafted legislation that would require Metro North to provide safety briefings to passengers, a bill which was reported unanimously through two Senate Committees. Elements of the legislation have already been put into practice by agency rule.

Yorktown Supervisor Michael Grace said, "When it comes to ensuring the safety of our residents local municipalities need every common sense option available. This legislation would provide invaluable technology to towns across the Hudson Valley and I implore the Assembly to pass this common sense measure as soon as they return to Albany. On behalf of the commuters of Yorktown, and all of their families, I would like to thank Senator Murphy for championing this important initiative."

Bedford Town Councilman Don Scott said, "Our community has been deeply affected by the Metro North tragedy. With two crossings in Bedford, I wholeheartedly support Senator Murphy's legislation which would improve railroads safety in New York."

Katonah's commuters include passengers from the Katonah-Lewisboro school district and the Katonah zip code portion of eastern Somers, both in Murphy's district. There are 17

dangerous Metro-North Grade crossings in Putnam and Westchester, according to the FRA. -

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