



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

David Carlucci

## Carlucci, Skoufis, EMS & Police Highlight Dangerous Dead Zone on Palisades Parkway, Near Harriman State Park

SENATOR DAVID CARLUCCI February 21, 2020

| ISSUE: **CELL SERVICE, INFRASTRUCTURE**

**(Bear Mountain, NY)** – Senator David Carlucci (D-Rockland/Westchester), Senator James Skoufis (D-Orange/Rockland/Ulster) local EMS and police brought attention to a dangerous dead zone on a 4-mile stretch of roadway from Rockland into Orange County on Thursday. Drivers traveling on the Palisades Interstate Parkway, Route 6, and around Harriman State Park are either unable to make a life-saving 911 call or the call drops.

Lawmakers, local EMS, and police gathered at the Anthony Wayne Recreation area in Bear Mountain to call on Verizon to begin construction on two cell phone towers. Officials emphasized the immediate need, as the busy stretch of the Palisades Parkway can see thousands of drives a day, and often the Parkway and Route 6 experience fatal vehicle or motorcycle accidents.

**Senator David Carlucci said**, “It’s a black hole, a dead zone, and people’s lives are being put in jeopardy when they cannot reach 911 or report an accident until almost 10 to 15 minutes later. When first responders are delayed in getting to a crash scene, lives can be lost. The stretch of roadways that we are talking about are very busy, and we saw in 2019, nearly 1 fatal accident every month. In addition, hikers fill up Harriman State Park in the summer, and they should be able to call 911 in an emergency or utilize GPS. It is time for Verizon to stop dragging their

feet and start construction on two cell towers that have been approved. Verizon has known about the problem since 2015, and its time they put public safety before profits."

**Senator James Skoufis said,** "In 2020, commuters and residents shouldn't have to worry about contacting emergency services if they are in an accident or conducting a work call on their car's Bluetooth because there's no cell phone service. Thousands of constituents drive through this dead zone along the Palisades Parkway, and I am committed to working with my partners in government and first responder agencies to finally fix this egregious situation. Conversations with Verizon are ongoing and I continue to urge them to resolve this service issue as expeditiously as possible."

State lawmakers were joined by the Woodbury Community Ambulance Inc. and Tuxedo Volunteer Ambulance Corp, as well as Town of Woodbury Police.

**Debbie Vobroucek, President of Woodbury Community Ambulance Inc. said,** "Think about how cold it is right now. Can you imagine if you were up on Route 6, in a crashed car, down an embankment, and the air is coming in, and you cannot get help?"

First responders noted that even if you can get a call out, it often drops. And if a good Samaritan sees a bad accident, he or she may have to wait until their out of the dead zone to call for help.

**John Kilduff, President of Tuxedo Volunteer Ambulance Corps said,** "People are going to the city on the Palisades Interstate Parkway from Orange County for work, school, or even medical care. If you are going to a doctor's appointment in Manhattan, and you break down here and get into some kind of accident, not being able to call 911 delays the Woodbury and Tuxedo Ambulance response. This is a disgrace that this dead zone has been here for such a long time over an expansive area."

Town of Woodbury Supervisor Frank Palermo and Village of Woodbury Mayor Timothy Egan also supported the call for cell towers in the area.

“I’ve been a paramedic for over 30 years serving this region. Cellular coverage is definitely an emergency services issue,” **said Village of Woodbury Mayor Timothy Egan.** “Victims and the bystanders need to be able to make the phone calls because without that, we do not even know to respond. We rely on cellular communications and data communication on that cellular network to do our jobs well. This is a live saving issue, and I want to thank Senator Carlucci and Senator Skoufis for pushing this issue, front and center.”

“I find this very disturbing. I have to watch every day on TV about the great Verizon 5G network, and this is a matter of life and death,” **said Town of Woodbury Supervisor Frank Palermo.** “Verizon needs to get on the ball and get this done. I would like to thank Senator Carlucci and Senator Skoufis for supporting this issue.”

Haverstraw Ambulance Corps, Inc., Stony Point Ambulance Corps, and Rockland County have also been advocating for cell service in this dangerous dead zone.

Verizon was made aware of the dead zone in 2015, and ever since then Senator Carlucci and Senator Skoufis have been putting pressure on the wireless provider and the Palisades Interstate Parks Commission (PIPC) about the need for the cell towers. The towers are to be built on State park land, which means approval for their construction had to go through the PIPC. In April of 2018, the PIPC granted Verizon approval to erect a 70-foot tower in the area of Overlook Lodge and a 120-foot tower at the south end of the southern Anthony Wayne Recreation Area parking lot. These two projects have completed the State Environmental Quality Review process and were bid on in November of 2019. However, construction on both towers has still not started.