



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

## Griffo, Buttenschon & Picente Address Exit 31 Issues with NYS Officials

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO October 27, 2021

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New York State Sen. Joseph Griffo, R-I-C-Rome, state Assemblywoman Marianne Buttenschon, D-Marcy, and Oneida County Executive Anthony J. Picente Jr. met with officials from the New York State Thruway Authority and Department of Transportation last week to address accessibility and safety issues at the Exit 31 Thruway interchange in Utica.

The trio raised some concerns to the group of state officials, which included Thruway Authority Executive Director Matthew Driscoll, that have arisen among the community in light of the toll booth removals at Exit 31, such as:

- Amount of parking and access to the Park & Ride.
- Access to the Oneida County Tourism building.
- Emergency vehicle turnaround.

A left turn is not currently permitted at the site because of installed gantries that are split by guardrails and jersey barriers that were not there prior to the toll booths being removed.

Discussion revolved around how to make those parking lots and the tourism building accessible to people without having to get on and off the thruway to turn around. Options included moving the Park and Ride to an alternate location and allowing backdoor access to the tourism building through the thruway maintenance yard.

State officials agreed to include additional signage for access points and new parking areas as well as further public communication on the changes to the exit.

The long-term redesign of the Exit 31 interchange, a joint venture between Oneida County, DOT, Thruway Authority and the Metropolitan Planning Organization, was also discussed by the group. That process is already underway and is expected to take 18-24 months, with the initial planning RFP to be released before the end of 2021.

**Sen. Griffo said,** "I thank Matthew Driscoll and the New York State Thruway Authority and the Department of Transportation for meeting with us to discuss the Exit 31 Thruway interchange in Utica. This meeting, for which we advocated, provided us with an important opportunity to discuss the Authority's most recent changes to the interchange, short-term solutions to address concerns we have raised and the long-term objective to reconstruct the entire interchange with the DOT."

**Assemblywoman Buttenschon said,** "My office has received many calls regarding the Exit 31 interchange and concerns about its functionality. Although there are plans to replace the interchange in the near future, it does not mean safety improvements or concerns should have to wait until then. I thank Thruway Executive Director Driscoll, his staff, and NYS DOT officials for meeting with us to discuss solutions."

**County Executive Picente said,** "Since the toll booths came down at Exit 31, there have been some community concerns about accessibility and safety. I thank Senator Griffo for

initiating this meeting to discuss the issues that have be raised and I am grateful to Executive Director Driscoll and the other state officials for taking the time to listen and consider our suggestions. I am confident we will find the proper solution.”

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