



Grimm: Pulaski spillover on Staten Island Expressway might not be as bad as feared

pukaski.jpg

Vehicles commute on the New York City bound Pulaski Skyway, right, Thursday, Jan. 10, 2013, in Newark, N.J. The major northern New Jersey roadway will be shut down for a two-year renovation. *(Associated Press)*

Judy L. Randall | randall@siadvance.com By **Judy L. Randall | randall@siadvance.com**

on March 07, 2014 at 5:47 PM, updated March 08, 2014 at 1:01 AM

STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. -- Staten Island lawmakers said they received positive assurances Friday from the head of the New Jersey Department of Transportation that Manhattan-bound express bus and car spillover onto the Staten Island Expressway likely won't be as bad as feared.

And his word to work together on contingencies if the need arises.

The increased morning rush-hour traffic, via the Goethals Bridge, will result from the multi-year Pulaski Skyway shutdown, beginning next month.

During a closed-door meeting in Sea View with local officials, NJDOT chief Jim Simpson pointed to alternate routes in Jersey for drivers, participants said.

It was also noted that with an estimated 105 express buses seeking the quickest route to Manhattan, the SIE, BQE and Gowanus, all undergoing extensive road reconstruction and repair, likely won't be used for long.

Rep. Michael Grimm, who **revealed the prospect of more than a hundred buses and possibly thousands of cars last month**, hosted the meeting with community leaders.

Simpson earlier called the addition of 105 express buses traveling along the SIE over a four-hour period "nothing," and said commuters couldn't be prevented from using the Goethals. He couldn't immediately be reached for comment after Friday's meeting.

Grimm, who had slammed the re-route as a "total slap in the face to Staten Islanders," called Simpson's appearance here "a breath of fresh air."

Grimm (Staten Island/Brooklyn) said a NJDOT traffic study estimated approximately 50 cars per hour during the four-hour morning rush would choose to use the SIE as an alternate route. He also pointed out that bus lanes do not go the full length of the SIE and might also be a discouraging factor.

"They have agreed to keep us in the loop the entire way," said Grimm, "and coordinate with the city and state Departments of Transportation in real-time, to develop contingencies from Day 1."

Grimm and Councilman Vincent Ignizio, who was on hand, also noted Simpson's willingness to discuss coordinated regional transportation efforts, such as ferries.

"Their model shows that using the expressway won't be the preferred option," said Ignizio (R-South Shore). "He wants to work with us on additional mitigation in the future, like fast ferries, HOV lanes and better communication between the states. He pledged to continue the dialogue with us, and said he will be talking with the New York State Department of Transportation commissioner."

"He assured us that their engineers do not foresee any problems, but will work with us over the course of the project should any complications arise after the work begins," added Assemblywoman Nicole Malliotakis (R-East Shore/Brooklyn), who attended the meeting. "I'm glad we were able to open a dialogue, not only on this issue but also with regard to regional transportation options like the West Shore Light Rail and ferry service to the South Shore."

But College of Staten Island professor Dr. Jonathan Peters, a co-founder of the Center for the Study of Staten Island, saw things a bit differently.

"They were saying the conditions on the Staten Island Expressway are so bad that buses will take another route," said Peters, who was invited to attend. "So, what does that tell you about the expressway that we drive every day? That doesn't sound like much of a strategy."

© 2015 SILive.com. All rights reserved.