



SARAH S. ANKER
Suffolk County Legislator, Sixth District



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

INFORMATION RELEASE:
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Contact: Theresa Santoro
Office: 631-854-1600
Email: Theresa.Santoro@suffolkcountyny.gov

Suffolk County School Traffic Zone Safety Commission Releases Final Report



From left to right: Legislator Kate Browning, Deputy Inspector Stanley Grodski, Legislator Sarah Anker, Longwood Transportation Coordinator Gale Winsper, and Suffolk County Assistant Director of Traffic Engineering Alexander Prego.

HAUPPAUGE, NY – On Friday, September 30th, 2016, Suffolk County Legislator Sarah Anker and the members of the Suffolk County School Traffic Zone Safety Commission released their final report, which includes a detailed outline of the commission’s actions, findings, and recommendations. The Suffolk County School Traffic Zone Safety Commission was created via resolution 199-2015 *Establishing a School Traffic Zone Safety Commission* sponsored by Legislator Sarah Anker. Legislator Anker drafted the resolution in response to many community, school, and local civic concerns regarding the safety of school zones in Suffolk County.

“Over the past year, the commission has advocated for safer streets for our children and created a list of recommendations to aid officials in addressing top areas of concern for school districts across Suffolk County,” said Legislator Anker. “The School Traffic Zone Safety Commission’s final report provides insight by surveying schools and analyzing police reports to create a solid framework for officials to continue to work proactively to address these concerns. Traffic safety is one of my top priorities, and I will continue to do everything in my power to ensure that our streets are safe for our children.”

The Commission was formed to bring together elected officials, governmental departments, school representatives, PTAs, civic associations, and community organizations throughout the region in a coordinated effort to address the many school traffic safety concerns that affect Suffolk County residents. Members of the commission included Legislator Sarah Anker, who is the Chairwoman of the commission, Legislator Kate Browning, the Chair of the Suffolk County Public Safety Committee, Legislator Monica Martinez, Chair of the Suffolk County Education and Human Services Committee, the Suffolk County Department of Public Works, the Suffolk County Police Department, the Suffolk Region PTA, and the Suffolk County School Superintendents’ Association.

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The School Traffic Zone Safety Commission's focus was on ensuring the safety and security of all county residents, with a particular focus on protecting schoolchildren. The commission studied and analyzed safety near schools throughout Suffolk County, documented school safety concerns and provided input to develop methods to improve safety in these areas. The report includes a list of safety concerns near Suffolk County school districts and the corresponding police accident data, as well as letters of advocacy for state programs to increase the safety of children on school buses. The report also includes data compiled by Longwood Central School District in a voluntary school bus camera pilot program conducted in 2015. The pilot program, which was conducted within the ten month school year from September to June, placed school bus cameras on three of the district's buses to record illegal vehicle passing data. During the ten months, the three buses recorded a total of 1,160 illegal passes.

"I want to thank the School Traffic Zone Safety Commission for its work, pointing out, in a very limited focus, over 1,000 cars illegally passed stopped buses with flashing signals," said Suffolk County Legislature Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory. "This is a child safety disaster waiting to happen. We must work quickly to address this issue."

"I am happy to see the School Traffic Zone Safety Commission complete its work, which includes recommendations to address the illegal passing of school buses," stated Legislator Kate Browning. "As a former school bus driver I know from experience that this is a serious problem that puts our children in grave danger. I have advocated for stop arm cameras on school buses since 2014 when I began sending letters urging our State officials to authorize this program. I hope to see it approved in next year's state legislative session."

"Whether they walk or ride the bus, all students deserve to get to school and back home safely. The more than 70 public school districts in Suffolk County share this common goal. Each district also has unique concerns. In Middle Island, we worry about the huge sand trucks on too many of our bus routes each day," said Gail Lynch-Bailey, President of the Middle Island Civic Association and member of the commission. "I believe our work will make our roads safer for students and families alike. I hope everyone will support legislation to place cameras on school buses to prevent impatient drivers from going around stopped school buses. The message is simple: stop and wait, before it's too late!"

The data collected and compiled in the final report by the commission provides a solid foundation for local elected officials and municipal agencies to continue work to address traffic concerns within their respective districts. The report is available on the Suffolk County Legislature's website by visiting <http://suffolkcountyny.gov/do6/home.aspx>, and it will be distributed to all Suffolk County Legislators and School District Superintendents. For more information please contact Legislator Anker's office at (631) 854-1600.

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