

Let's Bury Blood Alley: Time to Make Highways Safer

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This week is Work Zone Awareness Week, and there is no better zone to focus on than "Blood Alley." No, that isn't the name of a cheesy horror movie, it's the tragically accurate nickname given to the Southern State Parkway. What was once Robert Moses' dream route for New Yorkers to escape from the city out to Long Island, has long had the reputation as one of the deadliest parkways in the nation.

With more and more people choosing to travel by car instead of mass transit, and with an optimistic hope that this summer will bring increased safe outdoor activity and social gatherings, it's beyond time to do something about "Blood Alley" once and for all. We must protect our residents, workers, and out of town travelers. It's time to support the Southern State Parkway Safety Corridor Act and start saving lives.

The bill, sponsored by Assemblywoman Michaelle Solages and Senator John Brooks would effectively transform the worst section of the Southern State Parkway into a "Highway Safety Corridor." The goal is to reduce crashes, injuries and fatalities through increased education and enforcement of safer driving laws. To do this, the corridor will be identified with special signs to mark the area and inform drivers when they are entering or exiting the safety zone. There will be an increased

patrol of the area to ensure safe driving. Finally, the corridor could see the implementation of automated speed cameras to assist our police in holding unsafe drivers accountable. Other pending legislation supports cameras in construction work zones to help protect the safety of workers.

The Southern State was designed and built for another era. Reconstruction to meet today's engineering standards is certainly necessary. However, the greatest danger along "Blood Alley" is typically human behavior. In addition to advocating for constructing highway infrastructure improvements, attention needs to address the dangerous aggressive driving and speeding.

The sole intent of these measures is to save lives. Workers on these roadways put their lives at risk every day, and for road travelers, the perils of the parkway are many. Far too many have been needlessly lost to this disastrous roadway. In 2012, a report stated that 37 people had died on the road in the previous six years. Just last year, a tragic accident cost four people their lives and injured two. No more lives should be lost due to unsafe highway conditions. The parkway may have been built for a 1930's America, but in 2021 we have a unique opportunity to increase safety for all drivers on Long Island.

We have the way, now we need the will. With these proposed changes, we can forever bury "Blood Alley" for good.