

THE PORT AUTHORITY OF NY & NJ

May 5, 2017

Patrick J. Foye
Executive Director

The Honorable James S. Oddo
Staten Island Borough President
10 Richmond Terrace
Staten Island, NY 10301

The Honorable Steven Matteo
Council Member, 50th District
New York City Council
900 South Avenue, Suite 403
Staten Island, NY 10314

The Honorable Joe Borelli
Council Member, 51st District
New York City Council
2955 Veterans Road West, Suite 2
Staten Island, NY 10309

Dear Messrs. Oddo, Matteo and Borelli:

Thank you for your letter of April 14 regarding the Lincoln Tunnel Exclusive Bus Lane holiday schedule. The question you raise is an important one and one that we routinely review as we seek to optimize travel times through the tunnel.

The Lincoln Tunnel Exclusive Bus Lane (XBL) operates weekdays from approximately 6:00 a.m. until 10:00 a.m. Over 1,850 buses travel daily through the 2.5-mile contra-flow bus lane along New Jersey Route 495 from the New Jersey Turnpike to the Lincoln Tunnel. The purpose of the XBL is to bypass Lincoln Tunnel congestion. On some minor holidays, including Good Friday, bus companies operate a reduced schedule and we also see greatly reduced Lincoln Tunnel congestion. The basis of the decision not to operate the XBL is due to the combination of fewer buses and significantly less congestion. Because the XBL is a contra-flow lane (moving eastbound on the westbound side of 495), a steady flow of bus traffic provides a critical visual signal to westbound drivers and therefore enhances safety. If the XBL were to remain open on days with a sharply reduced flow of buses, the lack of this signal would increase the risk of collisions between eastbound buses and vehicles traveling westbound.

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That said, you may be pleased to note that on two of the “working holidays” you mention – Columbus Day and Veterans Day – the XBL is in use. Currently, the XBL does not operate on the following holidays: New Year’s Day, Martin Luther King Day, Presidents’ Day, Good Friday, Independence Day, Memorial Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and the day after, and Christmas. It is also worth mentioning that these are the same days on which the New York Stock Exchange is closed for either a full or half day. As mentioned above, this schedule is constantly under review and is subject to change as we review the data on traffic flow and potential schedule modifications.

While we are sensitive to the complaints you received from your constituents on April 14, it is worth noting that the traffic they experienced that day resulted from a specific incident in the tunnel and not from large bus volumes. On that morning, at approximately 6:30am, a tractor trailer became disabled with locked brakes in the South Tube. In order to ensure the safety of staff working to remove the truck, the South Tube was closed until the truck was removed at approximately 7:10am. With the South Tube closed, all traffic was diverted to the Center Tube, creating congestion and delays. Prior to the truck breaking down, and 20 minutes after the truck being removed (e.g. by 7:30am), there was no congestion at the Lincoln Tunnel. Eastbound Route 495 and the helix were operating at free flow conditions.

I hope that this information proves helpful. If I can be of any additional assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pat Foye". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Patrick J. Foye
Executive Director