



NEW JERSEY SENATE

SENATE CHAMBERS

P.O. Box 099

TRENTON, NEW JERSEY 08625-0099

June 9, 2020

Diane Gutierrez-Scaccetti
Commissioner
New Jersey Department of Transportation
P.O. Box 600
Trenton, NJ 08625-0600

Dear Commissioner Gutierrez-Scaccetti,

I hope this letter finds you well during these most trying times.

As I am sure you can appreciate, small businesses across New Jersey are struggling to survive after complying with executive orders issued by Governor Phil Murphy which have limited or prohibited most retail activity since mid-March. The thousands of restaurants at the heart of our downtowns and the nearly 350,000 workers they would normally employ have been hit especially hard by these restrictions. Many of those establishments have warned that they will go out of business permanently if they are not permitted to resume regular operations imminently.

I was encouraged when the Governor appeared to have listened to their concerns by making the long-delayed announcement that outdoor dining would be authorized to resume on June 15th, with the promise that his administration would work with local officials to expedite the permitting process to allow our restaurants to operate outside of the normal footprints, which will be necessary to accommodate social distancing requirements, meet the needs of pedestrians, and allow establishments to serve enough customers to make dining operations financially viable.

You can imagine my great surprise when I heard that the New Jersey Department of Transportation has denied the request of Morristown to shut down parts of South Street, a State road, to accommodate expanded outdoor dining. This denial does not appear to be in the spirit of partnership that Governor Murphy promised to help our restaurants and downtown communities survive this crisis.

I urge the NJDOT to reconsider the proposal by Morristown to shut down part of South Street as originally requested. Absent that approval, I would like an explanation detailing the Department's analysis for sustaining its denial along with any proposed alternatives the Department could offer to meet the needs of South Street businesses.

In this difficult economic time, I am sure you would agree it is imperative that the NJDOT and every office of State government go above and beyond to meet the extraordinary needs of New Jerseyans and our communities. I look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,

Senator Anthony M. Bucco
25th Legislative District